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Jackson Browne at the Watkins Family Hour at Largo, p. 32



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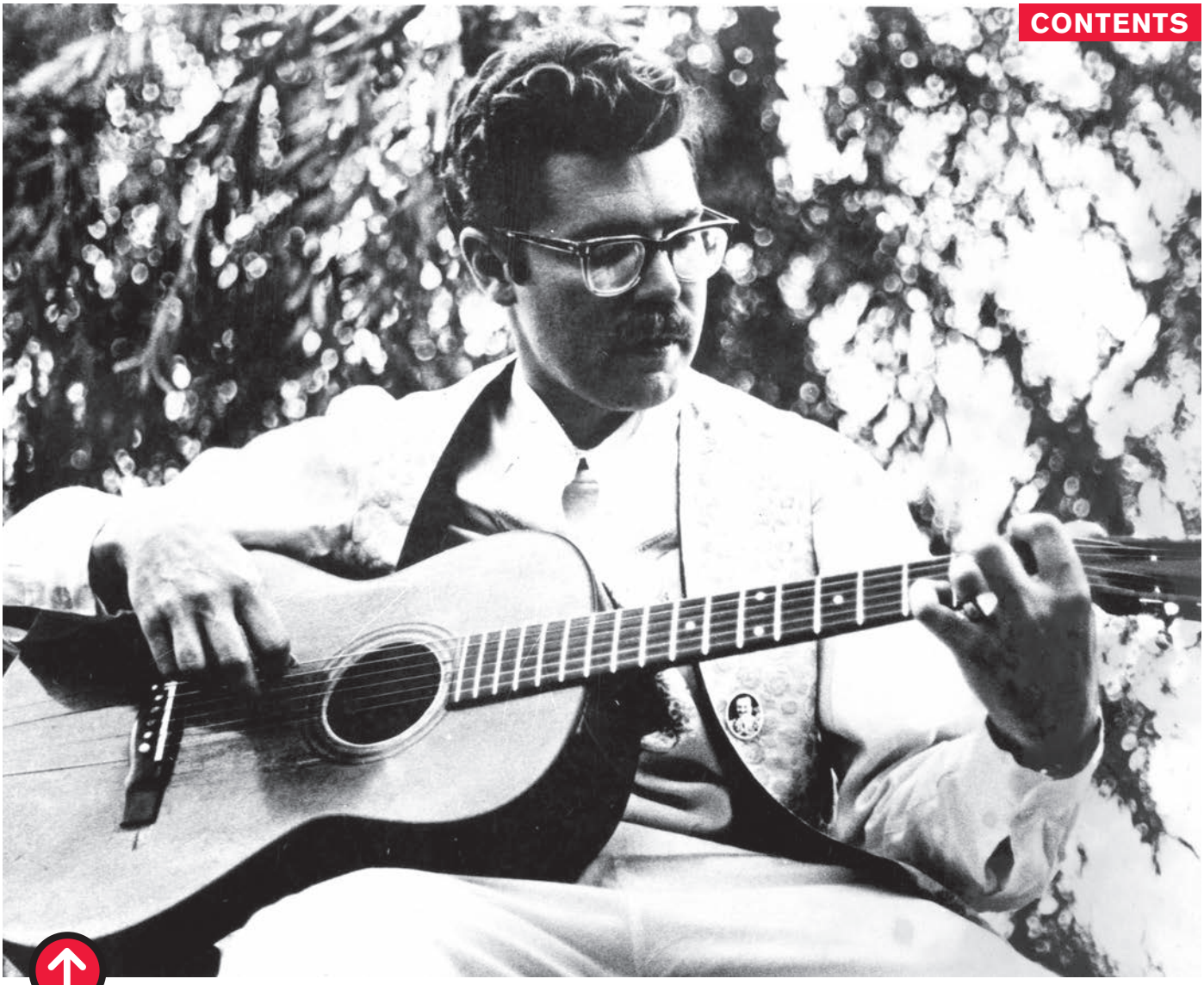
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'With the steel [strings] you can get fire. You can ride and you can fly. You've got your ponies and you've got your airplane.'
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Jackson Browne at the Watkins Family Hour at Largo

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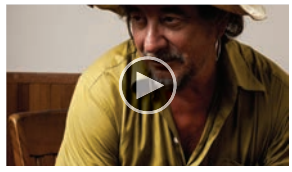
TOM BROSSEAU Watch the singer and storyteller perform three songs from his recently completed trilogy of Midwest-inspired albums on a new *Acoustic Guitar Sessions* episode.



SARA WATKINS
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JIM KWESKIN
How to start a jug band in 5 easy steps.



GREG BROWN
A longtime Gibson man reveals his soft spot for Martin D-18s.

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THE FRONT PORCH



ROMAN CHO

Sean and Sara Watkins backstage at the Watkins Family Hour in LA.

The Roadside Americana series has taken us twice around the United States with extra stopovers in Nashville and Texas. This month, *AG* contributor Melinda Newman spotlights 12 concert venues, guitar stores, and pop-up performance spaces in Los Angeles for a taste of the local acoustic-music scene. Of course, LA is a vibrant city rife with music labels, management firms, recording studios, instrument manufacturers, custom builders, festivals, and more.

Our cover subject, Jackson Browne, long identified with the LA music scene, inaugurated the intimate concert series at McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica. He continues as mentor. Our list, found on p. 32, hits some of the better-known spots and a few so obscure that even *AG* editors who have resided in the City of Lights were surprised. Please add your favorites in the online comment field.

Elsewhere, Melinda Newman returns with a report from the 2017 Folk Alliance International conference in Kansas City, Missouri, where Billy Bragg and Bruce Cockburn spoke on the relevancy of protest songs. And there's an interview with British fingerstyle phenom Michael Chapman, who recently recorded an album stateside; a feature on Ry Cooder's participation in a Tuscon, Arizona, tribute to Eduardo "Lalo" Guerrero, hailed as the father of Chicano music and a contributor to Cooder's 2005 album *Chavez Ravine*; and a salute to the fingerstyle wizardry of Robbie Basho.

The lessons provide instruction on improving your chordal fluency (compliments of San Francisco Bay Area rocker Gretchen Menn); playing blues like Alvin Youngblood Hart; and building your skills with a partial capo; plus there are three song transcriptions from Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge, Gabriel Kahane, and Eric Bibb.

Meanwhile, this month's gear section features reviews of a Collings T-Series OM, Taylor 814ce DLX, Luna Art Recorder, and the Spector Timbre acoustic bass, as well as an article on phantom power.

Great Acoustics punctuates the issue with a look at the White Lady, a spectral custom guitar built by Dana Bourgeois for Natalie Maines of the Dixie Chicks.

Play on.

—Greg Cahill

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KIRK STAUFFER

KEEPING IT REAL

Acoustic indie-rocker KT Tunstall chats effects and being 'rough around the edges' onstage

BY ANDY HUGHES

Fans of Grammy-winning Scottish singer-songwriter KT Tunstall's rocking live solo-acoustic shows will be pleased to know she enjoys not being too perfect in concert, despite an expanded stage show. "The setup has changed now," says Tunstall, speaking in her dressing room at the Cambridge Folk festival in England. "There are three synthesizers onstage now, and backing singers, and tracks being triggered, but I am still out there in front playing my acoustic guitar and making mistakes! I like things not being perfect, I enjoy performances that are rough around the edges, the mistakes are what make each gig unique. So I really don't bother about them."

Her most recent album is 2016's *Kin* (Sony).

So you're keen on effects these days?

I am more and more as time goes on. I used a loop pedal on [2004's breakthrough single] "Black Horse and the Cherry Tree," which is the song that started everything off really. I have a mixer onstage with me, and I split the signal from the vocal and the guitar and send that to the house sound, which sends a combined signal to the looper. I called my first pedal Wee Bastard, which is a good Scottish expression, only because it can be tricky to set up and operate properly.

What about your amplifier?

I still love the sound of a Fender Twin. I wish I could find a little [acoustic] amp because I am not very big, and it's a weight to heave around, but I love the sound of an acoustic guitar through an amplifier. If you play with that combination, you can get the distortions and reverb that you need, but it can be a bit volatile, it needs to be set up correctly, like the effects pedals.

How did you get the shimmering sound on "Everything Has Its Shape" on the new album?

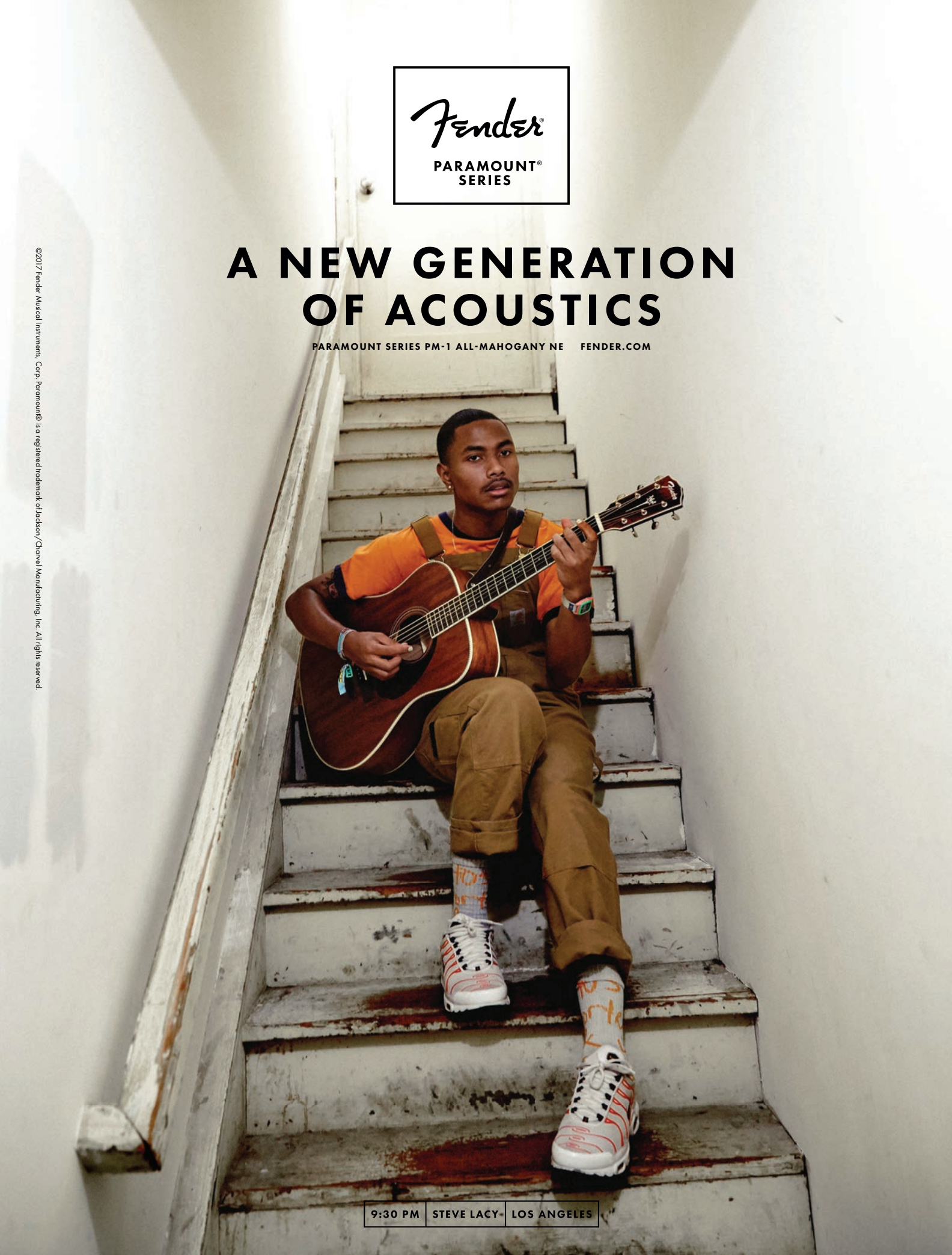
That's played on a Nashville high-strung guitar [in which the wound E, A, D, and G strings are replaced with lighter-gauge strings to allow tuning an octave higher than standard], a fan made it for me in Japan—this guy was training as a luthier, so he brought this guitar he had made and gave it to me at a gig. It's strung with the high strings from a 12-string guitar, which give it that lovely angelic sound. I call in the Angel Axe. It's great for recording because it gives a nice high clear sound without that mandolin edge to it.

Any other favorite guitars?

I must mention my Talisker whiskey guitar. Someone asked me once what my favorite drink is, and I mentioned Talisker whiskey, which is made on the Isle of Skye. Next thing I knew, Roger Bucknall of Fylde Guitars had made me a guitar from Talisker whiskey barrels. The soundboard is pine, and the back and sides are made from [oak] barrels. It's a wonderful guitar. Another guitar I would love to take out with me is my vintage Gibson parlor guitar. It looks gorgeous and takes you to a "porch and rocker" line of songs.

Would you like a custom-built acoustic?

Very much, and I am really lucky because Gibson is making me a custom white Elvis Dove guitar. The Elvis model had a black fretboard and a white scratch plate. Mine is all white with Southwestern triangle symbols on it from the album artwork. Hopefully it will survive me bashing the hell out of it! AG



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Pieta Brown created stripped-down acoustic songs on the road and asked musician friends to help complete them.

A Woman of Letters

Pieta Brown's new album tackles the isolation of the open road, with a little help from her friends

BY ANNA PULLEY

Like many musicians who spend a decent amount of time on the road, Americana songstress **Pieta Brown** found it difficult to stay connected with her loved ones while actively touring. So when she returned home, she decided to put a unique spin on staying in touch. Brown sent a series of musical postcards—stripped-down, acoustic shells of song she'd written while traveling—to her friends and mentors with a simple message: Complete the song and send it back.

The result is her new album *Postcards* (Lustre Records), in which each of the ten tracks features a special guest, including **Mark Knopfler**, **Calexico**, **Carrie Rodriguez**, **Mason Jennings**, **David Lindley**, **Mike Lewis** (saxophonist for **Bon Iver**), **the Pines**, and others. Brown recorded the basic acoustic guitar and vocals for the album, some with frequent collaborator and guitarist/producer **Bo Ramsey** in the mix, at a small garage studio before mailing out each track for friends to finish.

"This *Postcards* project was done at a time when I was struggling with some of the limitations I was feelings as an independent artist, and mother, living in Iowa," Brown says. "So, these collaborations that ended up happening surprised and inspired and touched me. And they also opened up my mind to new ways of experimenting with recording and collaborating."

Brown, whose father is acclaimed folk musician **Greg Brown** and whose stepmom is the venerate singer-songwriter **Iris DeMent**, grew up splitting her time between Iowa and Alabama after her parents' divorce, and says the long-distances played a role in fostering the importance of connection. "Isolation and distance were major influences on me as a child. And remain fixations for me—artistically, and otherwise. And it's wild how the internet keeps weaving them into our lives in whole new ways," says Brown.

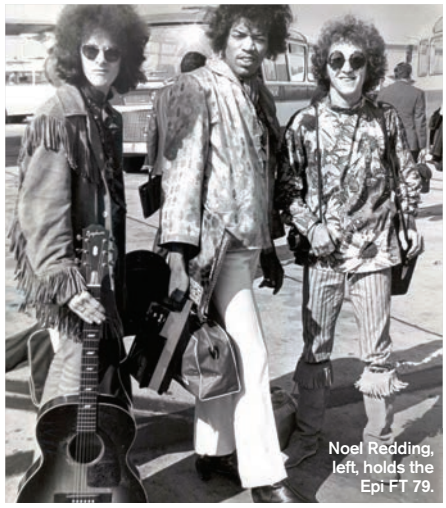
Highlights of the album include Knopfler's distinctive guitar on "Street Tracker"; Lindley's plaintive slide playing on "Take Me Home (Soldier's Prayer)"; Rodriguez's high-lonesome fiddle and clawhammer banjo on "Stopped My Horse"; and the ethereal, ghostly swells of reverberating guitar from the Minneapolis-based band, the Pines, on the closing track, "All The Roads."

Brown says acoustic guitar played a "major role" in creating these musical snapshots. "I received a beautiful Martin HD-35 as a gift from a friend a few years ago. I'm addicted to it. And it's full of songs. Most of the songs on *Postcards* came from that guitar."

JIMI HENDRIX'S EPI SOLD AT AUCTION

A historic acoustic owned by **Jimi Hendrix** for almost three years, from 1967 until his death in 1970—longer than any other documented Hendrix guitar—has sold at auction sold for $259,513 (£209,000). Auctioned by Bonhams London, Hendrix's 1951 Epiphone FT 79 features a bound spruce top, maple back and sides, tobacco sunburst finish, tortoiseshell-style scratch plate, a 20-fret rosewood fingerboard with parallelogram markers, Epiphone headstock inlay, chrome truss-rod cover and machine heads, and a sheepskin guitar strap. Bass player and occasional lead singer for The Jimi Hendrix Experience **Noel Redding** recalled that Hendrix purchased the guitar "second hand, for about $25, in New York after our first tour of the States and brought back to England with us on the plane." As Hendrix was left-handed, the guitar is strung for lefties, and also includes a (non-original) vintage hardshell case.

Kathy Etchingham, Hendrix's girlfriend at the time, said the acoustic Epiphone became Jimi's favored instrument. "It was used very, very heavily, continuously, all the time. Jimi had music coming out of every pore. One minute he'd be eating his breakfast, the next he'd say 'hey' and pick up the guitar and play the riffs in his head—only he could hear what he was hearing—and he would go through the words as well." *—Anna Pulley*

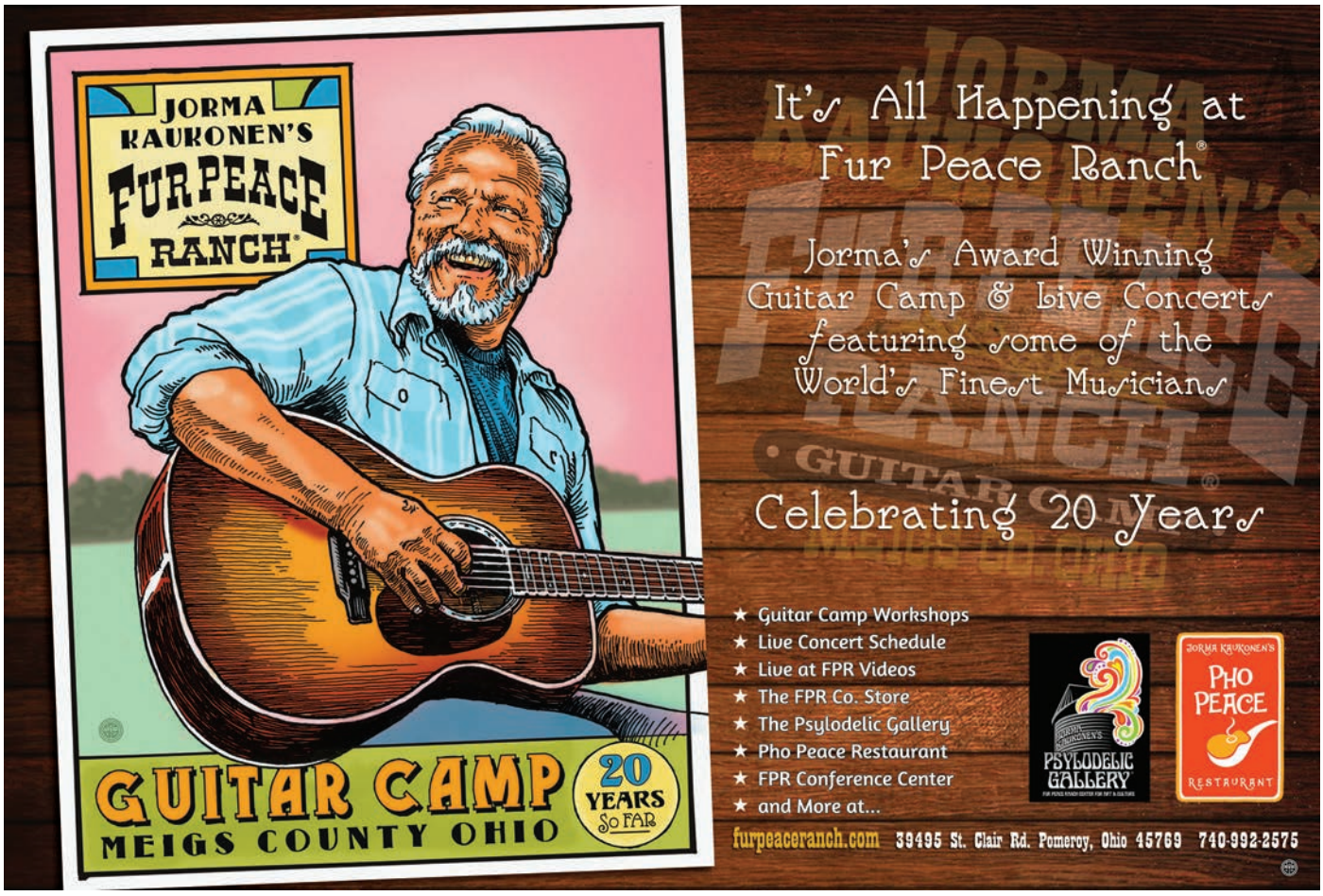


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Noel Redding, left, holds the Epi FT 79.

GRAMMYS WINS: FANTASTIC NEGRITO, SARAH JAROSZ, AND MORE

Acoustic highlights from this year's Grammy Awards include blues guitarist and singer **Fantastic Negrito** (Xavier Dphrepaulezz) winning his first Grammy for Best Contemporary Blues Album for *Last Days of Oakland*. Fantastic Negrito catapulted to fame after winning *NPR*'s Tiny Desk Concert in 2014. Multi-instrumentalist and acoustic troubadour **Sarah Jarosz** took home two Grammy Awards: Her album *Undercurrent* won Best Folk Album and her song "House of Mercy" took Best American Roots Performance. Louisiana-bluesman and phenomenal storyteller **Bobby Rush**, 84, won Best Traditional Blues Album for *Porcupine Meat*. Learn the meaning behind this unusual album title in Rush's recent *AG Session*, plus check out sessions with Fantastic Negrito and Sarah Jarosz at AcousticGuitar.com/Sessions. Other notable Grammy takeaways include **Vince Gill & the Time Jumpers** winning for Best American Roots Song ("Kid Sister"), and **Sturgill Simpson**'s *A Sailor's Guide to Earth* taking home Best Country Album. *—Anna Pulley*





United They Sing

At Folk Alliance Int'l conference, protest songs serve as a clarion call to singer-songwriters

BY MELINDA NEWMAN

Woody Guthrie famously placed a sign that read "This machine kills fascists" on his acoustic guitar in 1941, signaling that his instrument—combined with the collective strength of those who heard his music—wielded the power to topple corrupt leaders. Nearly 80 years later, the acoustic guitar is still the tool of choice for singer-songwriters looking to spread a message in this divisive political climate. That was amply evident at the 29th annual **Folk Alliance International** (FAI) conference, held February 15-19 in Kansas City, Missouri. The conclave drew more than 2,500 artists from 20 countries, seemingly all with an acoustic guitar in hand and song to be shared through the more than 3,000 showcases—official and private—and in every nook and cranny of the Westin Hotel.

This year's theme, Forbidden Folk, served as a clarion call to remind artists to use their voice—singularly or in connection with like-minded musicians. "Our role is to provide the opportunity to connect here," said FAI executive director **Aengus Finnan**. "We're not trying to editorialize what people say or how they say it—that's not our role—our role is to inspire and provoke and challenge."

To further inspire, the organization created two new awards in 2017: the People's Voice, which went to multi-platinum recording artist **Bruce Cockburn**, whose 40-year career has consistently highlighted environmental, social, and indigenous issues globally; and the Clearwater Award, which honors festivals that prioritizes sustainable event production

> **'We're not trying to editorialize what people say or how they say it—that's not our role—our role is to inspire and provoke and challenge.'**
> **ANGUS FINNAN, FAI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

For **Ani DiFranco**, returning to FAI after a dozen years to deliver a keynote speech felt like "coming home. This is a really important gathering," she said. "It's a realm of music that really applies social consciousness, community [and] political organizing all wrapped up together. That's why I've always called myself a folk singer, no matter what the sound was."

In a commercial world in which pop music is king, folk has been relegated to a niche that doesn't always have access to the necessary infrastructure to propel growth. FAI helps solve that, said Texas Music Hall of Famer **Eliza Gilkyson**. "It's a very small genre. We need to find each other and reward each other. Folk Alliance is the best clearing house for that."

Throughout the conference, young folkies strummed protest songs by **Pete Seeger** and Guthrie. It's an homage that **Nora Guthrie**, Guthrie's daughter, appreciates. "[He] evolved the ancient tradition of storytelling [by ending] with a line or two that had something to do with a possible solution to the problem," she said. "What Dylan then did was take the same tradition and add an aspect of poetry to it. There's always someone who kicks the ball uphill a little bit."

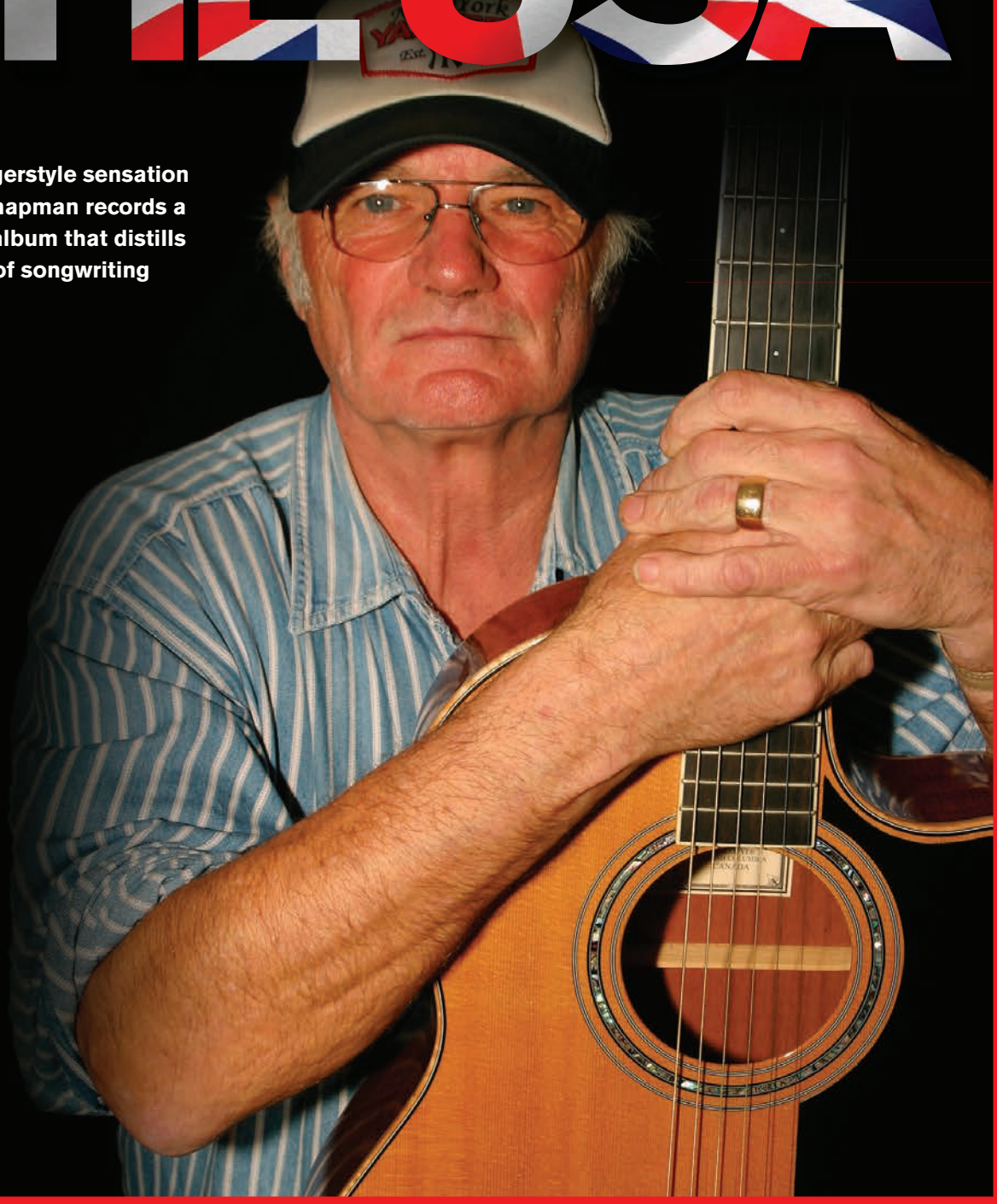
Like many musicians attending FAI, for singer-songwriter **Tift Merritt** the acoustic guitar remains her best delivery method. "There's something authentic about just relying on an acoustic guitar and a message and a heart and that makes folk music trustworthy at a time when not much can be trusted," Merritt said. "[It says], 'I'm speaking straight to you. I'm trying to tell the truth. I have four chords and a message.' No one can take the power away from that." AG


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MADE IN THE USA

British fingerstyle sensation Michael Chapman records a stateside album that distills a lifetime of songwriting

BY KENNY BERKOWITZ



Fifty years ago, on a rainy night in Cornwall, England, Michael Chapman decided he was too tired to keep driving. So he talked his way into a local folk club, and because he didn't have any money, he offered to play for half an hour to cover the entrance fee. He'd never planned on being a musician, but that half-hour set turned into a steady gig that lasted all summer, and led to another and another and another, all the way to the present. He's now passed his 76th birthday and just released his 56th album, titled *50* (Paradise of Bachelors).

Over the years, he's released albums of singer-songwriter folk, dark electric blues, and looped, languid acoustic-guitar instrumentals. On his masterpiece, *Fully Qualified Survivor* (1970), he reached the British charts with the brooding "Postcards of Scarborough," but for most of the past half-century, he's worked far from the spotlight, developing an intricate, richly detailed fingerpicking style that's earned comparisons to John Fahey and drawn such fans as Black Twig Pickers, Hiss Golden Messenger, Thurston Moore, William Tyler, and Lucinda Williams.

On *50,* playing with musicians half his age, Chapman has fulfilled a lifetime ambition to record in an American studio with American musicians. He's written three new songs—including "Sometimes You Just Drive," his latest rain-soaked apocalyptic song—that stand alongside his best, and he's collected another seven from his past few solo recordings. Tracks like "Memphis in Winter" and "That Time of Night" distill a lifetime of songwriting into a few short lines of searing, restless prose, compressing decades of road-weariness into lines like "We're past the end of nowhere, all along the worn-out plain, where the devil lies awaiting and it gets too dark to rain."

A half-century after turning pro, Chapman has released his finest work in years, or maybe ever—music that's deeply haunted and starkly uncompromising—carried on an unlikely dream of finally finding an American audience.

I caught up with him during a phone call from his home outside Newcastle, England.

How did the sessions for this album come about?

I knew the guys in the band, and I've known [engineer] Jason [Meagher] since I toured the Eastern Seaboard with the No-Neck Blues Band. He's got a studio called Black Dirt. It's in upstate New York, so we went up there for four or five days, put some stuff down, and found out that it's not a bad little band. It's alright. When the chance came to do it again properly for Paradise of Bachelors, I said, yeah, but I didn't know whether to do it with Jason or go to California to do it with Scott Hirsch, because I really love Scott's production on Mike Taylor's albums [as Hiss Golden Messenger]. It was a toss-up, and Black Dirt won out because the band was there. That was the choice.

Would the album have sounded different if you'd done it in California?

Yeah. It's not the record I would have made with Scott. It's the record I made with the guys. The last four or five albums, I was the band, and I finally came to accept that this would be different, that it was not going to be just another Michael Chapman record. My wife said, "You're doing it in America. Do it with American musicians in an American studio in an American way." I found that difficult, to be honest. I've turned into a bit of a control freak.



A half-century after turning pro, Chapman has released his finest work in years, or maybe ever—music that's deeply haunted and starkly uncompromising.

I'm so used to being in control of everything. But the concept with this album was to give away control, so it wouldn't just be me making an album solo. After the sessions, I had to come back to Europe to go on tour, and when I heard the first mixes they sent me, I was horrified.

Are you still?

I love it. It's really grown on me. It's still not the record I would have made [in the UK], but that's the point—it's the Michael Chapman *American* record.

What's so 'American' about it?

Everything. At the moment, there's a certain sound coming out of American records, which is very dense. My records tend to be sparsely played, but with lots of detail, and for the first time in donkey's years, we actually sat around and recorded the songs together. Usually, I'll put down a rhythm guitar, then a bass drum and a snare and a high hat and another guitar and a bass and keyboards. I assemble things, like you'd do with a car. But this time, it was like the car was already there, we just got in and drove. That's not a bad simile, actually. I'm used to taking quite a while putting things together, and this album was more about sitting down in a circle, looking at each other, and playing. It was like 30 years ago. I'm not a perfectionist. If somebody says, "I played a bum note on that," I say, "If it feels right, it fits right. Forget it." As long as it works, it doesn't matter, does it?

What guitar are you playing on the tracks?

A 1964 Gibson J-50. And it sounds like it. That's one of the things I love about the album. You can actually hear that it's a big, old Gibson, with that Gibson thump at the bottom end. That really pleases me, because I chose that guitar. If I'm working in the studio here [in the UK], I can turn up with ten guitars. But I could only take one on the plane, and Jason, God bless his cotton socks, just got the sound of it perfectly, I think. It's got a huge bottom end, it sounds more like a J-200 than a J-50. Lovely.

Did the band choose the songs or did you?

I did. I cherry-picked some songs I'd written that had never seen the light of day in America, except for one track, called "That Time of Night," which has an amazing version by Lucinda Williams. Can you imagine how I felt when Lucinda Williams recorded one of my songs? Staggering. And I actually wrote three new songs, just before we started recording. I've written over 300 songs, but nothing in the last four or five years, so I thought maybe that's all there was in the tank. And to suddenly write three new songs, to me, that was like a gift from heaven, like, "Oh wow, it hasn't disappeared." I love that song, "Sometimes You Just Drive." Every now and again, I come up with an apocalyptic song. I don't make a habit of it, but they just spill out at some point, and that's one of them.

Did 'Sometimes You Just Drive' start with the first line?

Yeah, exactly: "Trees caught fire, sky turned red, fish in the river turned up dead."

And the rest?

That's always baffled me: How the hell do I write? Because I've never been professional about it. Songs either appear or they don't. I must have lost a thousand songs driving down the highway, because I've got a great idea in my head, but by the time I get to where I'm going, I've forgotten it. We live on a farm, and when we moved up here in 1972, I took three months off the road to write an album—and if I wrote three words, I was lucky. I just can't get professional about it. The songs either turn up or they don't.

The thing is not to worry. I have a sack full of pieces of paper with two or three lines on them. I go through them every now and again,

and before you know it, the numbers have joined up. I got halfway into a new song, which is just about place names. We were driving into New Orleans and a storm turned up and we took shelter in a church in a place called Pass Christian, Mississippi, near Biloxi. I'm not a religious person, but this storm was truly a Gulf storm. We sheltered for a day in this church, and when I walked out, I went into an antique shop and bought a great pair of Mexican dancing boots. They're amazing, and I got them for $25 in Pass Christian, Mississippi, because there was a storm. I think that deserves a song.

Absolutely. How did 'Money Trouble' come to you?

It's bizarre, but like I said, there is no method to the way that I write. If you're a working musician like I am, money trouble is just part of your life. Some years are better than others. Sometimes you're living in high cotton and sometimes you're not. I've been broke three times and rich twice. It's not a bad average.

How rich?

Well, not by Elton John standards, but to me, I was incredibly rich. I had a brand new car every year and lots of guitars. Then all of a sudden, three years later, I'm stiff. Absolutely flat broke. That's the way it goes. We've all got a self-destruct button somewhere.

What did you learn by giving up control?

To trust people. Steve Gunn and Jim Elkington were playing guitar. Nathan Bowles was playing drums and banjo. Jimy SeiTang was playing bass. If you've got great players like that, you can't tell them what to play. They're not going to play badly on purpose. Just turn 'em loose.

Do you practice?

No, never. When I walk onstage, I don't have a set list. I like to surprise myself. I don't make plans, and that includes set lists, practicing, whatever.

How has your guitar playing changed over the years?

When I first started playing in the clubs, I made a reputation for playing at the speed of light. I played everything so fast—it was rubbish, but it was *really fast* rubbish. I'm not 30 anymore. I've mellowed and I'm playing better than ever, because I know when to leave spaces in between the notes. I know when to play one note instead of 26. That's what's changed. It's not that I've slowed down. I can still play fast if I want to, I just don't want to.

Do you still play electric guitar?

I'm part of a Dylan tribute band, but I just stand on the end and play lead. I don't know any Dylan songs, so everything is new to me every night. It's quite interesting. I just turn up with a Telecaster and an amp and start playing. I get a few drinks down me, a few pounds in my pocket, and I'm happy. Sometimes that's all you need.

How do you keep going, even though you have this self-destruct button?

I don't self-destruct anymore. In 1990, I wound up with a massive heart attack. I was in a coma for a week, and when I woke up, I said, "Michael, you'd better start behaving yourself."

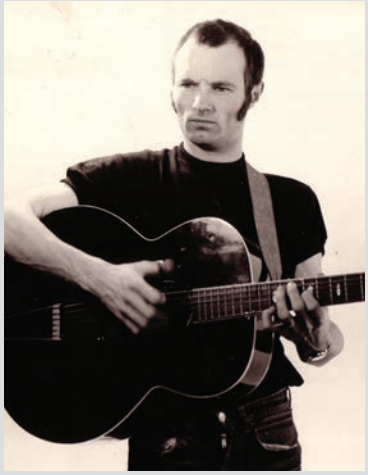
How has life changed since then?

I'm not self-analytical on any level, really. I mean, I'm sober most of the time. In those days, I was drunk most of the time. How my wife stayed with me, I've got no idea. But she did. My life has changed. I'm in control—sort of, mostly in control. Of course, at my age, one never is, and I get things wrong occasionally because I keep forgetting that I'm 75. I still think I'm 30. I mean, this new album is called *50* because I thought it was my 50th album, but apparently it's my 56th, which is a ridiculous amount of work to have done.

Are you surprised you've been playing for 50 years?

Enormously surprised. I'm an ordinary bloke, I'm kind of Mr. Average, really. It's just that I've got this weird job that Mr. Average wouldn't want, because it's too dangerous. It's too unpredictable. Which is what I love about it. People ask, "What plans have you got for next year, Michael?" I say, "I never make plans." Every plan I've ever made has gone wrong, so I just don't do it anymore. If it hadn't been raining that night, what would my life have been like? I was in a marriage that was falling apart. *I* was falling apart. I didn't have any work, I'd resigned from my job teaching in a college. I could have been a truck driver, I have no idea what it would have been like.

There's a theory that a butterfly flaps its wings and then the whole world changes. It's something like that. If it hadn't been raining that night [50 years ago in Cornwall], I wouldn't be here talking to you. It never occurred to me that I could be a professional guitar player. I didn't realize people like me could write songs, I just thought these things appeared from some kind of parallel universe. So whatever I would have been, it's not something I think about. It's not something I even conjecture about. Que será, será. AG



WHAT MICHAEL CHAPMAN PLAYS

"I used to have quite a decent collection of guitars," says Michael Chapman. "But there was a period of life that my wife calls 'Michael Chapman: The Missing Years.' I drank a lot of guitars back then—drank some beauties. That's the way it goes."

Of the 15 or 16 that remain, Chapman chose to record his new album on a 1964 Gibson J-50 that he bought 20 years ago. The rest stayed at home, including his main stage guitar, an all-mahogany 1951 Martin 000-17 that he calls "an incredible thing. In 1951, there wasn't a whole bunch of wood around in the States, because World War II had just finished and the Korean War was just winding up. It was probably made out of old furniture, and the wood in the guitar could be 200 years old, which is why it sounds so amazing. I walked into a guitar store to buy a set of strings and I couldn't walk out without it. It was the most expensive set of strings I ever bought."

Other guitars he's kept include a small-bodied 1966 Gibson LG-1 and a set of electrics: a Fender Telecaster, a pair of Stratocasters, a Gibson ES-125, a Gibson ES-175, and a Gittler. They're all strung with Elixirs because "I've gotten so used to them now, been playing them for such a long time that other strings sound like barbed wire."



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BROTHERS IN SONG

Guitar-icon Ry Cooder honors his old friend Eduardo 'Lalo' Guerrero

BY KAREN PETERSON | ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVIA WISE

El Casino Ballroom is packed. Its famous wooden dance floor, once the largest in the state of Arizona, is obscured by banquet tables and rows of folding chairs. Inside this historic Latin social club, the heartbeat of the small Mexican-American city of South Tucson that borders the downtown of its sprawling neighbor, Tucson, Arizona, the mood is equal parts festive and reverent.

The sold-out crowd of Latinos and Anglos of all ages, grandchildren to grandparents, is celebrating the memory and the music of a beloved native son, born and raised in the barrio here, and an internationally acclaimed and honored singer, performer, and prolific composer, the late Eduardo "Lalo" Guerrero, "the father [and the voice] of Chicano music in America."

The celebration concert includes roots-rock, blues, and Latin-music icon Ry Cooder. Billed as "Lalopalooza," the concert is both a birthday party—Guerrero would have been 100 in December 2016—and a benefit for Tucson's community radio station, KXCI-FM. Now in its 33rd year, it has a dedicated listener base appreciative of the station's eclectic "DJ-curated" programming and shows, like "Sabor del Barrio" hosted by Bob "Pepe" Galvez, one of the event's two primary organizers.

"I always play at least one song by Lalo," says Galvez, a long-time Guerrero admirer. "Seeing him play live blew my mind . . . and to have Ry Cooder involved tonight, well, that was the gold seal."

Galvez realized in late 2015 that Guerrero's 100th birthday was coming up and he and KXCI jumped into action to organize the tribute. The show also followed a precedent set by the station over the years: affordable admission—tickets for the three hours of Lalopalooza cost $15–$20.

Around the time that Galvez noticed the milestone, fellow Lalo fan Dan Buckley did, too. "I put out a thread on Facebook and the response just exploded," says Buckley, a former music critic for the local paper and a filmmaker now nearing completion of his documentary on Tucson's youth-mariachi movement.

"I'd been writing about music in this city for 30 years, and Lalo and I became good friends," says Buckley, who joined Galvez's efforts to celebrate Guerrero. "It took me ten years before I realized the magnitude of the man," which included a deep love of laughter—expressed famously, says Buckley, through still popular parody tunes, "There's No Tortillas" sung to the tune of "O Sole Mio," among them.



Guerrero was "the Forrest Gump of Mexican music," Buckley jokes. "Everywhere he went, whatever he did, amazing things happened."

THE COODER CONNECTION

Guerrero inspired and gave rhythm to generations of Mexican Americans, recording an estimated 700 songs, many his own, over a 70-year career—his tribute to Mexican music, "Canción Mexicana," is still considered the unofficial anthem of Mexico. A guitarist and pianist, Guerrero's repertoire was immense, including every Latin genre, traditional acoustic ballads, and cha-chas, as well as blues, jazz, and comic ditties. His work spanned the decades, from the zoot-suited *pachuco* era of the 1940s to Chicano activism in the 1960s (at one time, his booking agent was famed union leader Cesar Chavez), and everything in-between and beyond.

Guerrero died in 2005 at age 88, a few months shy of the release of what emerged from his final studio session, Cooder's *Chavez Ravine*. Guerrero contributed three songs, among them the nostalgic paean to his birthplace in Tucson, "Barrio Viejo," an appropriate inclusion—Chavez Ravine and Barrio Viejo were both vibrant Mexican-American neighborhoods fractured in the name of urban renewal in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles, the subject of Cooder's album, became a baseball stadium; a chunk of Barrio Viejo, a convention center.

Guerrero's musical connection to *Chavez Ravine* is one reason the audience at El Casino is over-the-top enthusiastic: Cooder is there, playing impeccably from the far end of the stage, without fanfare, almost to the point of anonymity—a member of the event-planning team thought the tall, black-clothed Cooder was the sound guy and missed an opportunity, he moans, "to ask him to sign my poster of the *Buena Vista Social Club*." The well-dressed, well-coiffed woman in her early 60s sitting next to me is practically swooning.

A HUNDRED-YEAR MILESTONE

"I was just sitting in with the band like I like to do," says Cooder, 69, after the show. Invited by a Tucson acquaintance, Cooder was more than happy to accept—and participate (doing so for free). "It was going to be fun for me. I get to do this. I get to play. No one calls me to do Lalo tunes."

'Seeing him play live blew my mind . . . and to have Ry Cooder involved, well, that was the gold seal.'
BOB 'PEPE' GALVEZ, EVENT ORGANIZER

For Cooder, Guerrero was one of the linchpins of the 2006 Grammy-nominated *Chavez Ravine*. "If I hadn't been able to get Lalo or [the father of pachuco music Don] Tosti, I wouldn't have done it," he says of the album that portrays LA's Latin culture and music within the backdrop of midcentury racial politics. "It wouldn't have been real without either of them. They had lived through that whole era."

Cooder not only flew in and back again that evening from his home in Santa Monica, California, he offered to help put together the Guerrero tribute, calling on such friends as jazz bassist and Tucson native Rene Camacho and the soulful Latin vocalist Ersi Arvizu, who

also appears on *Chavez Ravine*. Arvizu came with a fitting Guerrero connection, beyond the work they did together on the album: He and her father grew up in the same besieged Tucson barrio.

Cooder joined Camacho and Arvizu in a set that included both "Canción Mexicana" and "Barrio Viejo."

"I like the old-time Chicanos, the group feeling," says Cooder of the audience. "So the musicians are just part of it, not freaks like in pop. You don't get the nagging sensation that you have to surpass yourself with every note.

"I actually had fun."

Also performing was Los Nawdy Dawgs, a Guerrero tribute band made up of local musicians gathered by Camacho and providing backup for Adalberto Gallegos, a Tejano Music Hall of Fame singer; Tucson folk musicians Ted Ramirez and Bobby Benton; and Tucson's famed youth-mariachi group, Los Changuitos Feos. Guerrero's sons were there: Dan, one of the emcees, and Mark, a songwriter and singer, who performed.

CHAVEZ RAVINE REVISITED

"You have to have a collective awareness or a memory of things or it's just a bunch of tunes," says Cooder of projects like *Chavez Ravine*: Authenticity counts, legacy matters. He saw the latter in action at Lalopalooza, from the children in the audience to the teenaged mariachi players in Los Changuitos Feos—a community-based ensemble that has nurtured young musicians for more than 50 years.

They not only know of Guerrero, they play his songs regularly.

As for authenticity, that's why Cooder sought out Guerrero in the first place as he began putting together the pieces that would become *Chavez Ravine*. "I got Guerrero's phone number, I can't remember how, maybe from Linda [Ronstadt]," Cooder recalls. "He was living in Palm Springs. I called and he knew me from *Buena Vista Social Club*. That was good. He had an understanding of who I was.

"I told him I was trying to do a record, and that I'd like to come down to see him." Not only was he "very hospitable, very friendly," says Cooder of the initial visit, Guerrero came up with the metaphor Cooder was seeking for the *Chavez Ravine* narrative. "You couldn't do a literal sad song about Chavez Ravine. It's no fun, and it's no good in Spanish anyway. Spanish doesn't work that way."

"We got to talking," Cooder continues, "and I asked if he knew anyone in the Ravine. He mentioned two fighters, both named Chavez, and both were friends of his because he was a boxing fan.

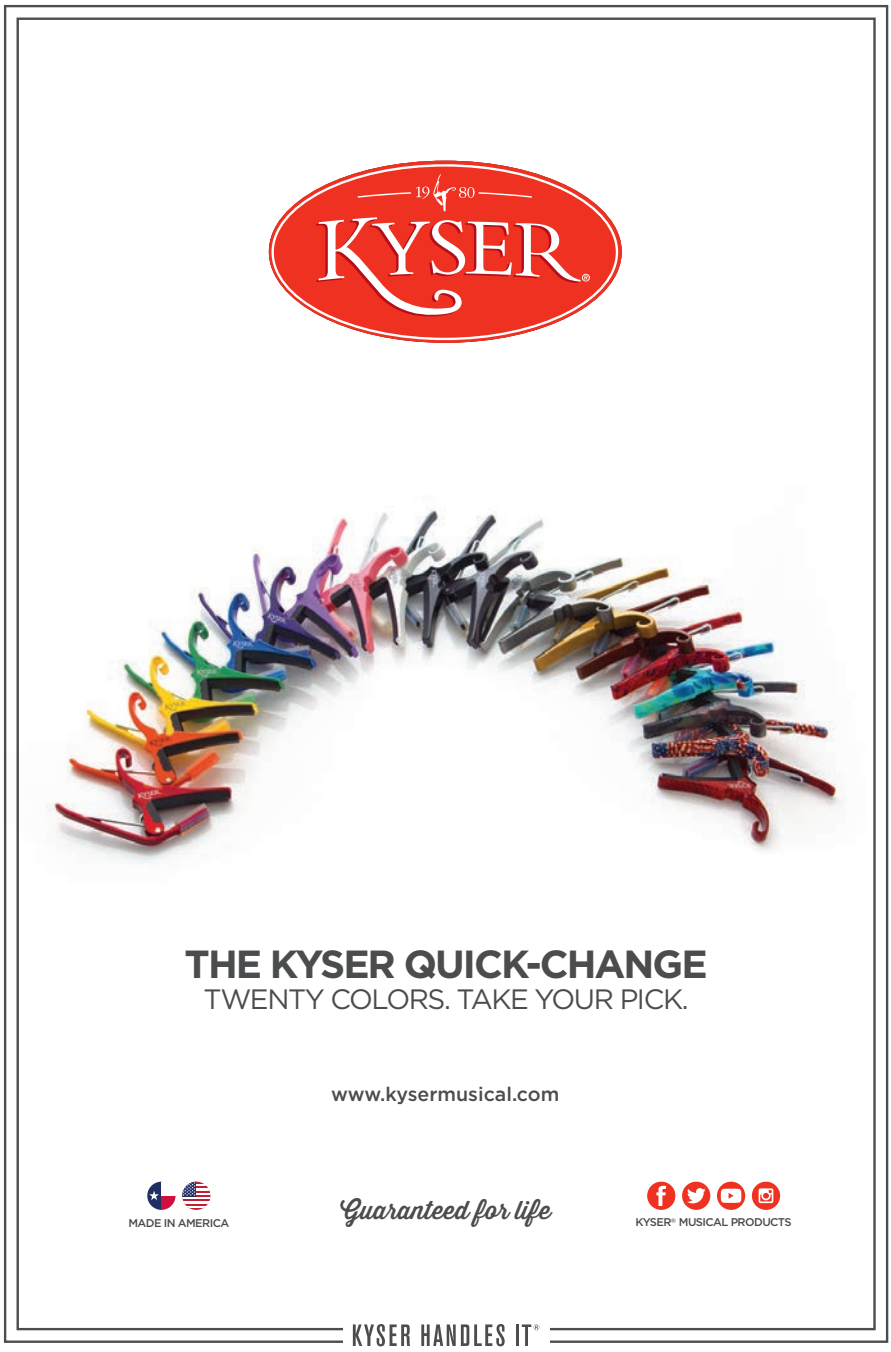
"I said, that's perfect, that's the metaphor: the fighter fights a clean fight, an honest fight, no hitting below the belt, but he comes up against dark forces, he can't win. There's no way to succeed, he's down for the count."

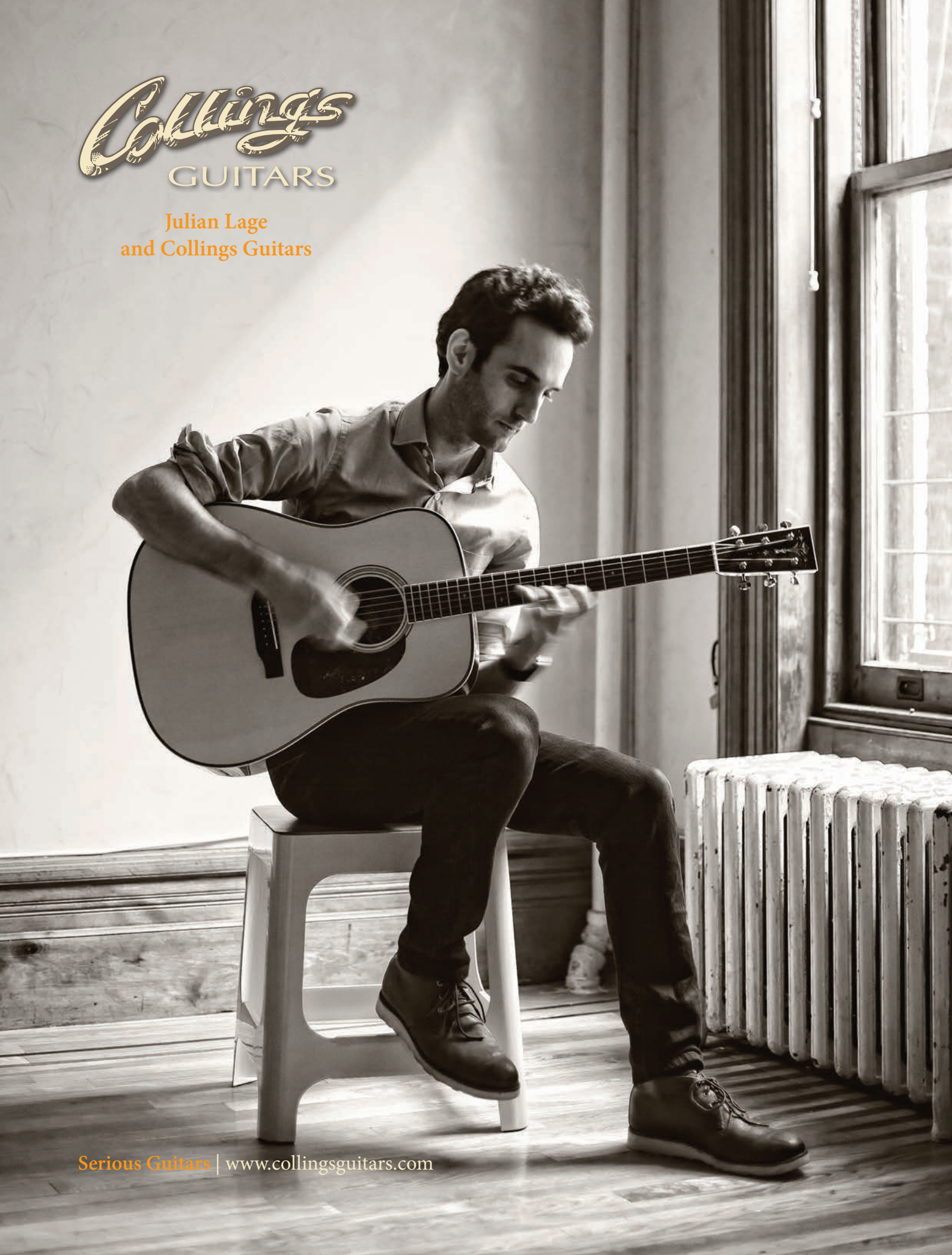
When Cooder left that day, he asked Guerrero to work on the song and "to give me a call when you have something." Halfway back to Santa Monica, his mobile phone rang. "It was Lalo. 'I think I've got it,' he said. I said, 'Wow, really,' and pulled off the freeway. He sang it to me over the phone. It was absolutely perfect, signed, sealed, and delivered. It spelled the whole thing out in perfect corrido 3/4 time."

The result was "Corrido de Boxeo," sung by Guerrero with Cooder on bajo sexto.

With the exception of Compay Segundo of Cuba, whose artistry was captured in *Buena Vista Social Club* and catapulted globally, Cooder says of Guerrero, "I don't think I know anyone who was so adept at that kind of word imagery.

"Most musicians can't see the image. They live in it. Lalo was the expert. He understood," Cooder says. "He created this tremendous musical life out of being versatile, but also by being so gifted with the paint and the colors. He was so unique." AG




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mood music

The pan-cultural tone poetry of legendary fingerstylist Robbie Basho continues to inspire | BY ADAM LEVY

In the mid-1960s, American guitarist Robbie Basho set out to shepherd the steel-string guitar to its rightful place on the stage, much as Andrés Segovia had done for the Spanish classical guitar. As Basho told an interviewer on radio station KPFA (94.1 FM) in 1974, "Me, [Leo] Kottke, and [John] Fahey—ten years ago—started really trying to make it a concert instrument. That's what we're into. Gut-string is great for love music, and so forth. With the steel you can get fire. You can ride and you can fly. You've got your ponies and you've got your airplane. You can do all kinds of things with steel."

Indeed, Basho did do all kinds of things—composing, performing, and recording original music for six- and 12-string. His approach was perhaps even more ambitious than Kottke's or Fahey's, weaving together themes from the classical literature, sounds borrowed from Hindustani and Persian musical traditions, Native American influences, and flashes of early Americana.

Basho recorded for several labels during his career—including Windham Hill, Vanguard, and Takoma Records, which was founded by Fahey. Today, Basho's recordings are woefully hard to find. Only two—*Basho-via* and the live *Bonn ist Supreme*—are currently available on Spotify and iTunes. Two of his late-'70s Windham Hill titles—1979's *Visions of the Country* and 1980's *Art of the Acoustic Steel String Guitar 6 & 12*—have recently been reissued by Gnome Life Records. (Even if you don't have a turntable, these vinyl releases are worth considering, as they come with download codes for FLAC and MP3 files.) You may have luck finding other Basho titles on CD or LP at your local used-records store or in online stores.

Basho, a Baltimore native who died in Berkeley, California, in 1986, continues to inspire such acolytes as Will Ackerman, Richard Osborn, and Buck Curran.

While introducing a song on *Bonn ist Supreme*, a 2008 Bo'Weavil release of a 1980 live recording, Basho told his audience, "There are many tunings to this style of playing. This is one out of 35."

No kidding.

He was fluent with dozens of tunings and was sensitive to the particular characteristics inherent to each one. In the liner notes to his 1965 debut album, *The Seal of the Blue Lotus* (Ace), Basho included a "modal tunings chart," in which he listed the "color," "mood," and "concomitant properties" of various tunings. Of open-G tuning, for example, he gave "dark blue and purple-pink" as the colors, "deep blues, mountain snow" as the mood, and "international tuning: Tibet, India, Japan, Blues, all purpose" as the concomitant properties. Basho cataloged several other tunings on this chart, including open C (C G C G C E, low to high), which he described as "sun yellow, gold, emerald green").

All of the examples in this Basho lesson are in open C, which the guitarist used extensively. To get into this tuning, drop your low E string all the way down to C (two whole steps), A down to G (one whole step), and D down to C (one whole step). Then raise your B string up to C (one half step). Your G and high E strings stay put. Limiting your exploration to this single tuning will give you a more in-depth look at a few notable facets of his artistry—rather than a passing glance at many different aspects, via his numerous tunings.

A PIECE OF CAKE

Ex. 1a is in the style of the first section of "German Chocolate Cake," from *Bonn ist Supreme*. Use your thumb to play the down-stemmed notes and your fingers to play the up-stemmed notes. This will be the rule for all of the examples that follow, as well. The open second string (C, in this tuning) is

sounded on the downbeat of measures 1–5 and should ring clearly throughout each of those measures. The eighth notes in measures 1 and 2 are played as hammer-ons, with slides into the quarter notes that follow. Make sure that the picked notes and the slurred notes have a similar weight to them—ease up on your picking hand and let your fretting hand work a little harder.

Ex. 1b requires a similar touch—particularly in measures 3 and 7, where the eighth-note triplets should be played breezily. In the final measure, let your thumb graze both the sixth and fifth strings, giving the chord some extra *oomph* on the low end.

BACK IN THE SADDLE

Though Basho's compositions could be enigmatic at times, he wrote many light-hearted guitar pieces as well. Among these is the episodic "Rodeo," from *Visions of the Country*. In **Ex. 2a**—reminiscent of the opening theme of "Rodeo"—migrate a three-note shape up the fretboard on the three uppermost strings while looping an alternating bass figure on the open sixth and fourth strings. Slide up into the downbeats of measures 2 and 3 on the first string, using the indicated grace notes.

Based on a secondary theme from "Rodeo," **Ex. 2b** is less harmonically active, but features a compelling melody in the first four measures that is echoed in the measures that follow. On Basho's original recording of "Rodeo," there is a brilliance and immediacy to the way the notes speak. To replicate this effect, try picking the strings a little closer to the bridge.

RAMBLIN' MAN

"Redwood Ramble" originally appeared on Basho's 1981 album *Rainbow Thunder: Songs of the American West*. The piece also appears on *Bonn ist Supreme*. Though not officially released until 2008, *Bonn* is a documentation of a live 1980 performance in Bonn, Germany. **Ex. 3a** is in the style of the main theme from "Redwood Ramble," as performed on this live rendition. The C-major chord in measure 1 is played on strings 1–3, with a shape that would look like a C-minor triad if you were in standard tuning. The D-major chord in bar 2 and the F chord in the following measure are both played with a full barre, at frets 2 and 5, respectively. The

Basho was fluent with dozens of tunings and sensitive to the particular characteristics inherent to each one.

only tricky part here is the pull-off, from G to F, at the end of measure 3. To deftly synchronize this slur with the alternating bass pattern, practice the moves slowly until they're automated.

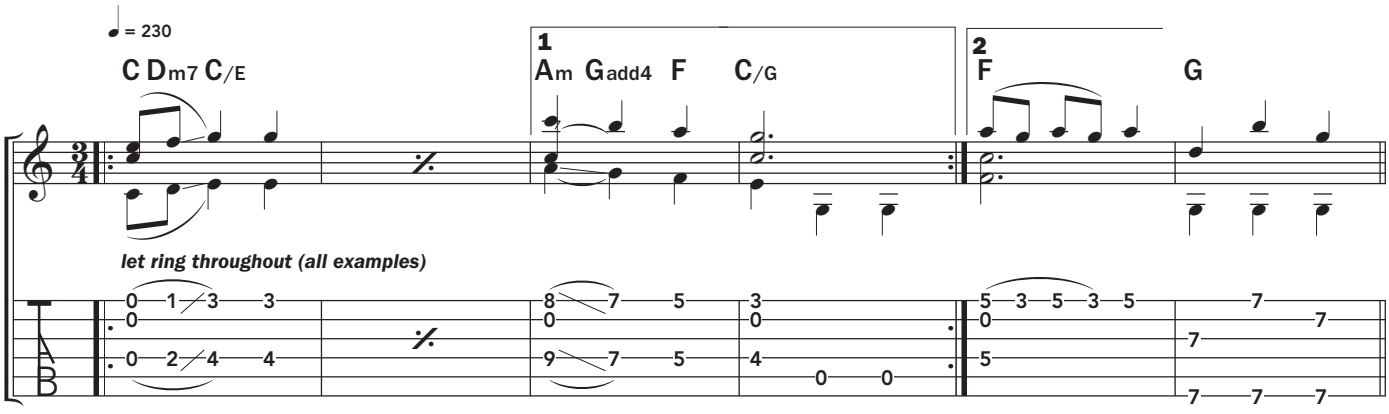
Ex. 3b is based on the tune's second section, which shifts to a C-minor tonality. The melody notes in measures 1 and 2 are played solely on the first string. Use a half-barre across strings 1–4 in measures 3 and 4, then a full third-fret barre in measures 6 and 7. In the final four measures, maintain a full barre at the seventh fret, keeping the alternating-bass pattern in play while the harmonies shift above in syncopated rhythm.

The harmony in **Ex. 3c** (again, in the style of "Redwood Ramble") goes even farther astray—zagging all the way to F♯ major before settling back in to the original C-major tonality. The tangy gesture in the final

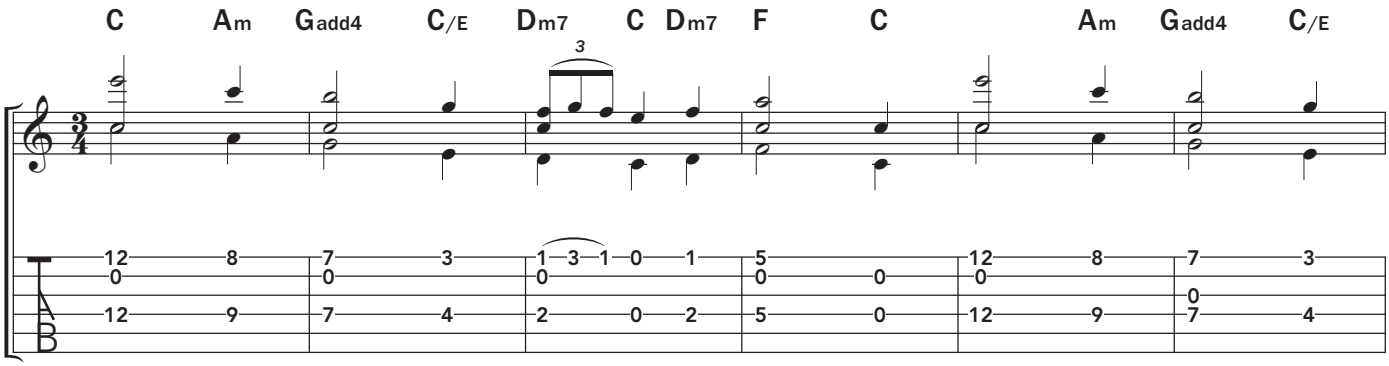
Tuning: C G C G C E

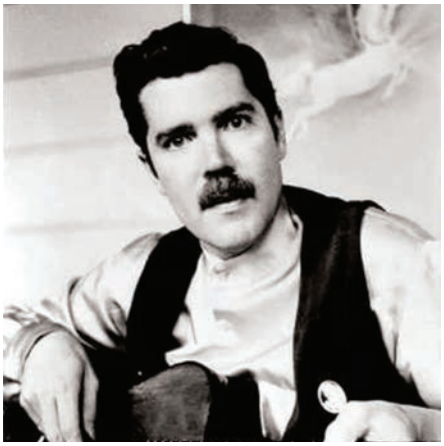
In the style of 'German Chocolate Cake'

Ex. 1a



Ex. 1b





measure reminds that—where blues is concerned—the dividing line between major and minor sounds isn't always clear. Use full barres for the F♯ and E♭ chords. No barre is required elsewhere in this example.

STUDY SKILLS

The last examples are inspired by the Baroque-informed "A Study for Steel String," from *Art of the Acoustic Steel String Guitar 6 & 12*. "A Study for Steel String" alternates between two different time signatures—6/8 and 4/4—at varying tempos. **Ex. 4a** is similar to some of the 6/8 phrases in Basho's original. In measures 1 and 2, the anthemic melody is played in octaves. **Ex. 4b** is likewise modeled on some of the 6/8 phrases in "A Study for Steel String." The sliding moves in measures 1 and 2 lend buoyancy in this example, as do the trills in measure 4.

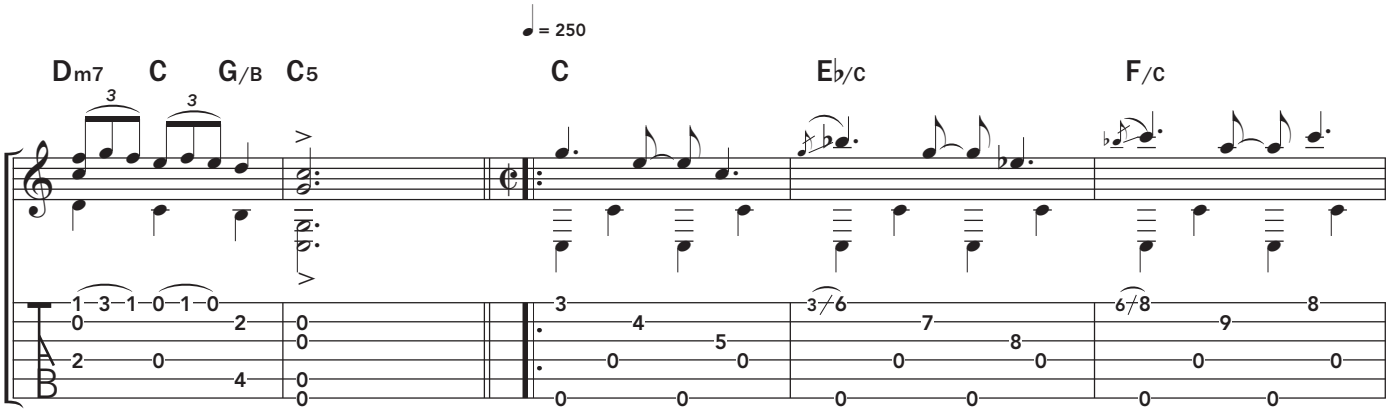
'With the steel you can get fire. You can ride and you can fly. You've got your ponies and you've got your airplane.'
ROBBIE BASHO

Whole-step trills such as these are played with rapid-fire hammer-ons and pull-offs. For the D-to-E trill, strike the D (fretted with finger 1), then immediately hammer up to E (with finger 3), then pull-off back to D; continue this fluttering move for the duration of the note. Play the following G-to-A trill using the same movements.

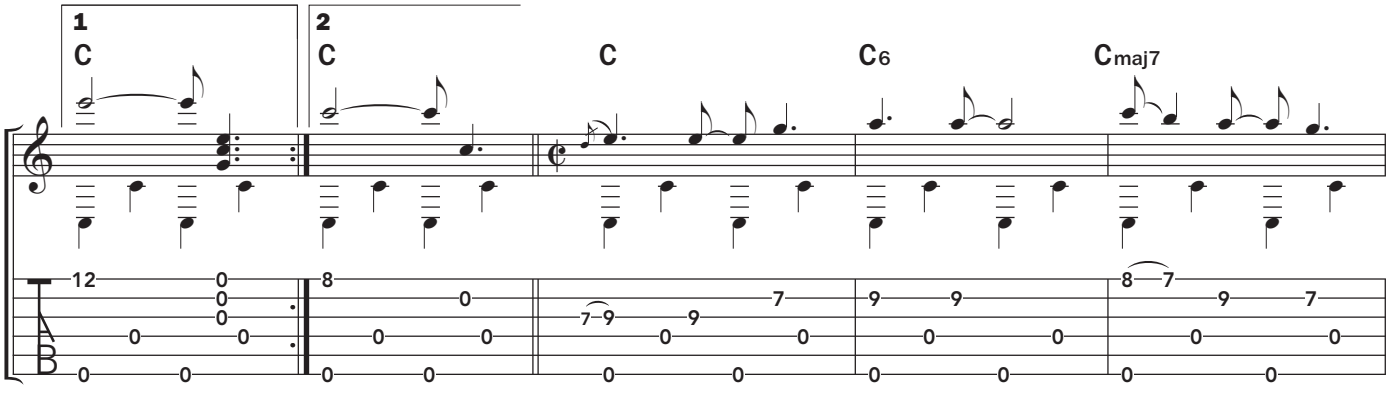
Inspired by the brisk 4/4 passages in "Study," most of **Ex. 4c**'s melody is played on the first string, while an octave pair of Cs chimes in on the open second and fourth strings. You'll have to tread lightly with the melody to avoid inadvertently muting the open strings.

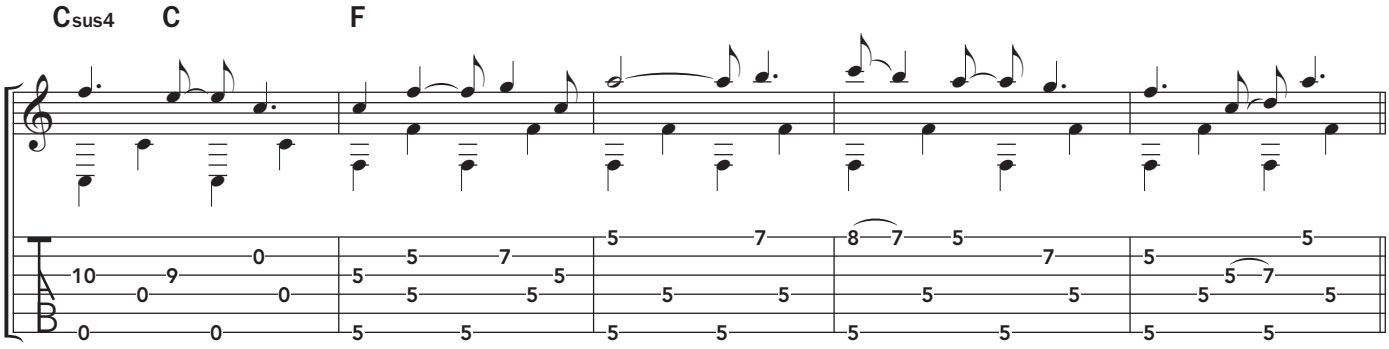


Ex. 2a **In the style of 'Rodeo'**

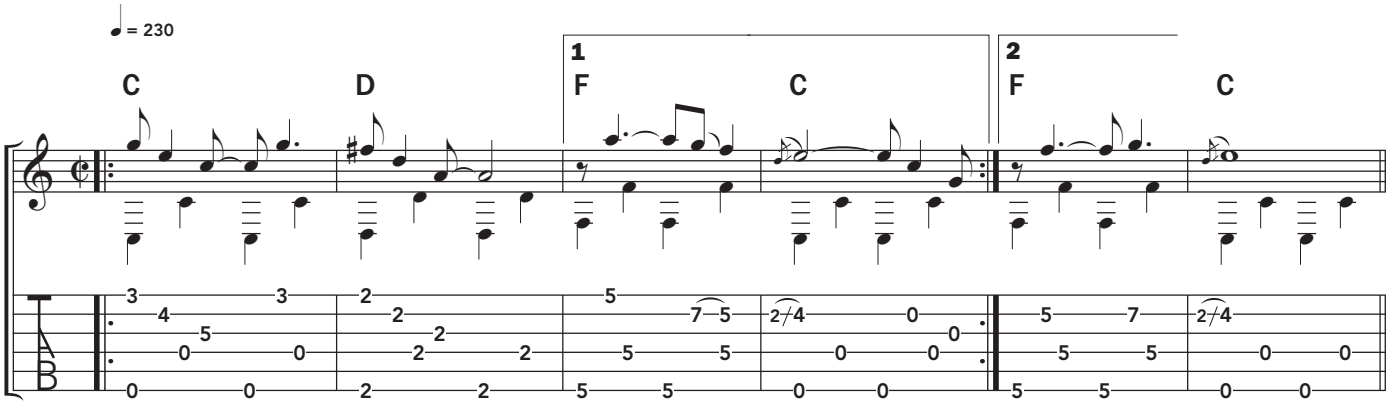


Ex. 2b

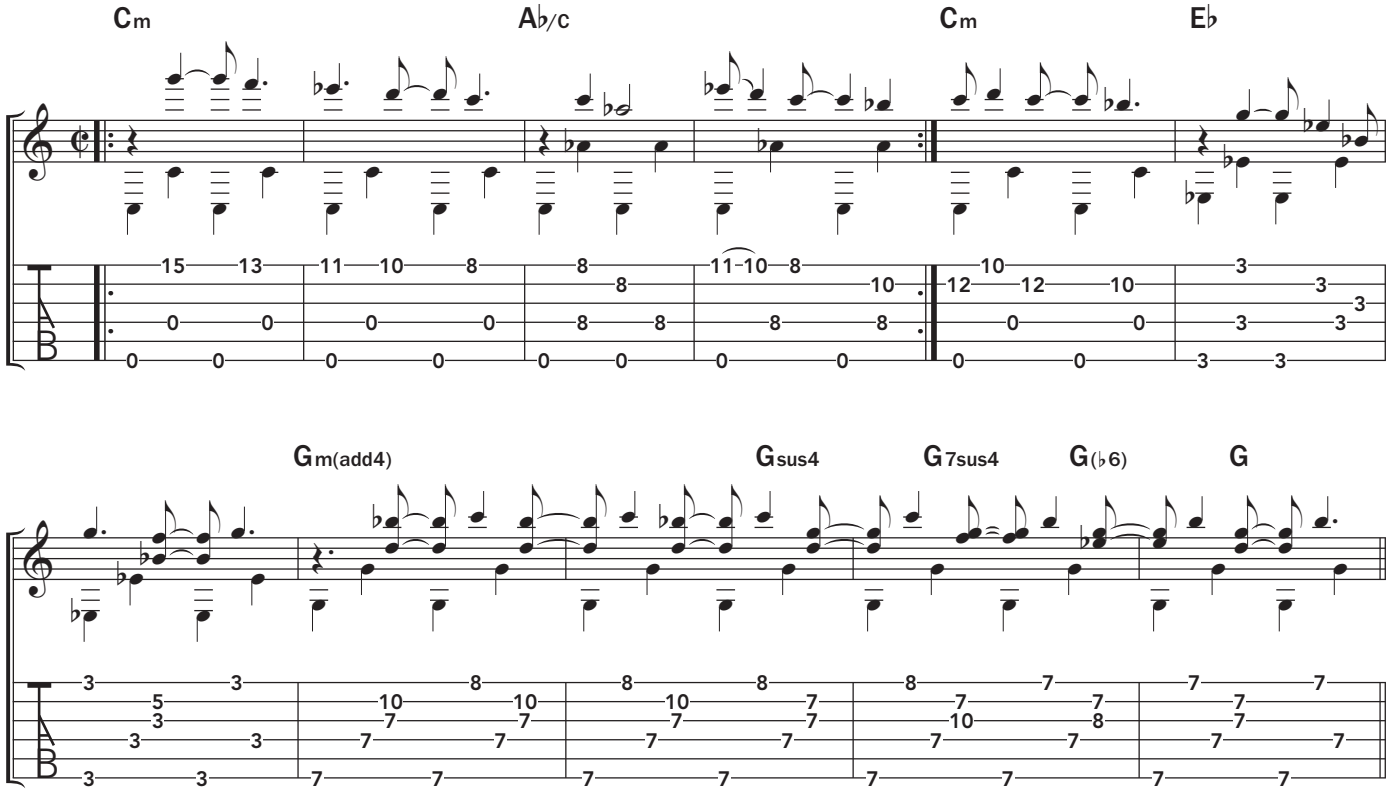




Ex. 3a **In the style of 'Redwood Rumble'**



Ex. 3b





THE VOICE OF BASHO

Basho was a one-of-a-kind artist who explored many new avenues for the steel-string acoustic guitar. His career was tragically brief—he only lived to be 45 years old. Still—though I've tried here—it would be impossible to distill his panoramic vision into handful of short examples.

If you're interested enough to further explore Basho on your own, you may find this list of the tunings he used on *Bonn ist Supreme* helpful: "The Grail and the Lotus" is in open C minor (C G C G C E♭); "Fandango" and "Variations on 'Claire de lune'," open A (E A E A C♯ A); "(Variations on) 'Easter'," open D (D A D F♯ A D); and "Cathedrals et Fleur de Lis" is in the unusual E-Lydian tuning (B E B E G♯ A♯). (As of this writing, there's a superb video on YouTube of Basho playing "Cathedrals et Fleur de Lis," archived from his 1971 appearance on KQED public television.) The remaining tunes on *Bonn ist Supreme* are in open C.

Today, Basho's recordings are woefully hard to find. Only two—*Bashovia* and the live *Bonn ist Supreme*—are currently available on Spotify and iTunes.

If you'd like to hear Basho talk about music—his own, and his multicultural influences—visit archive.org and search for "Robbie Basho, ode to gravity." You should have no trouble finding Charles Amirkhanian's fascinating 1974 conversation with Basho, originally broadcast on KPFA radio. I also recommend director Liam Barker's excellent 2015 Basho film documentary *Voice of the Eagle: The Enigma of Robbie Basho*. **AG**



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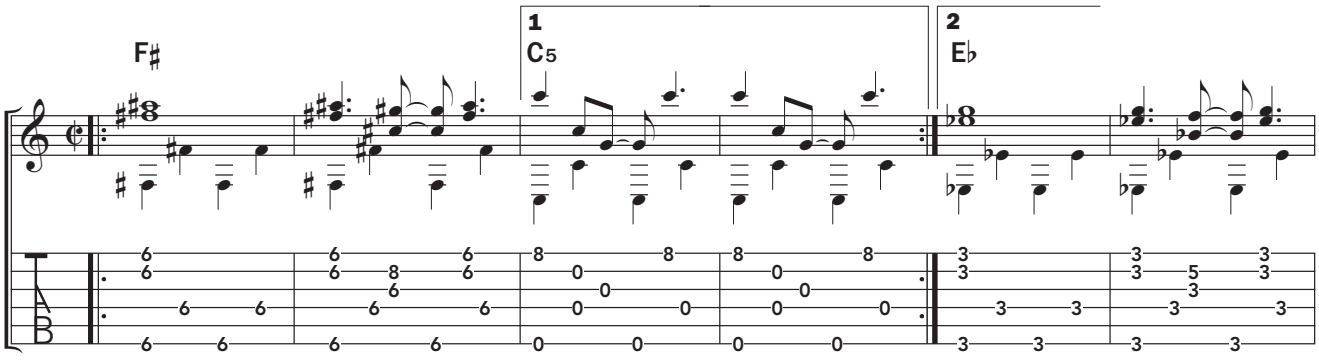
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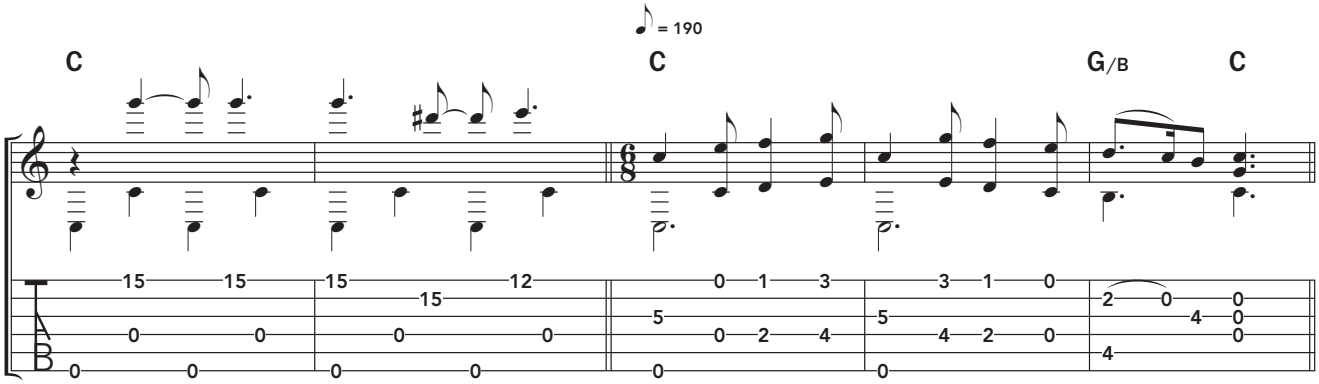
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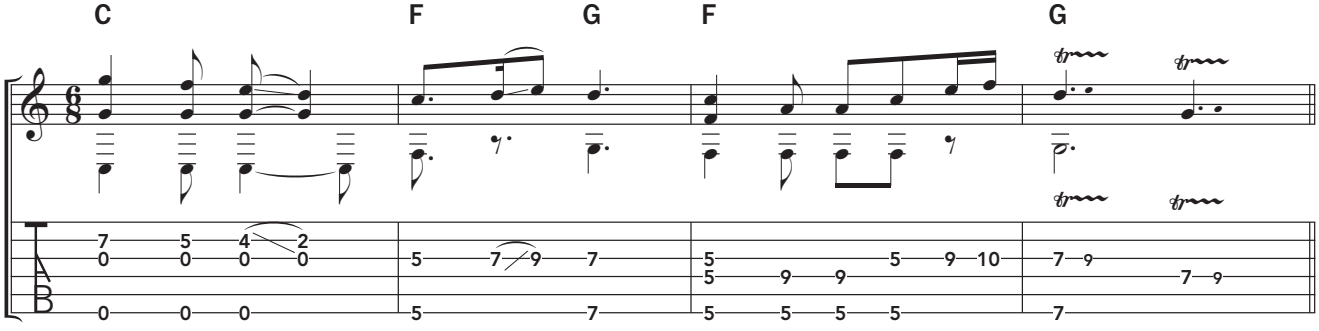
Ex. 3c



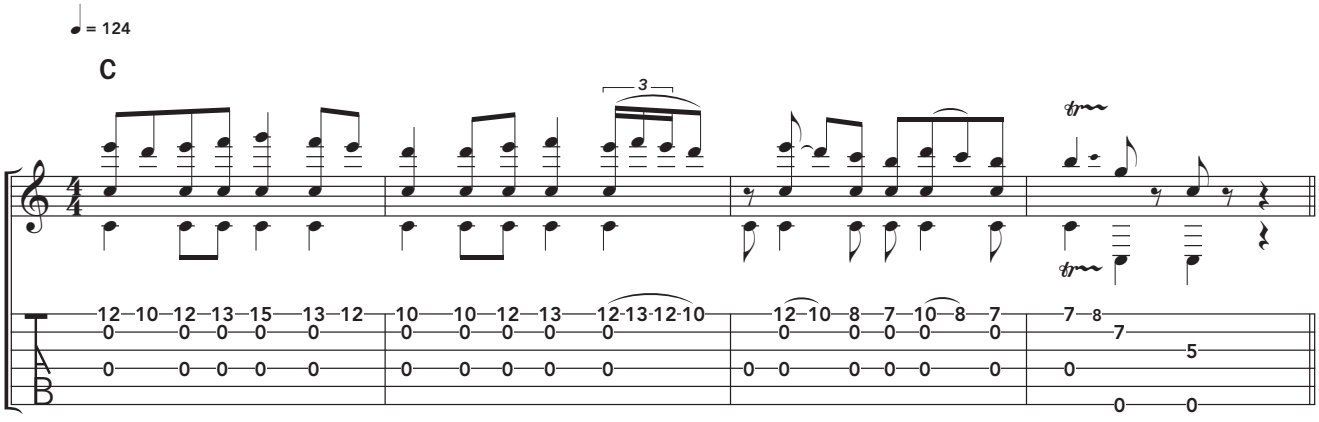
Ex. 4a **In the style of 'A Study for Steel String'**



Ex. 4b



Ex. 4c





Julian Lage gets ready for a solo set at Hotel Cafe in Hollywood.



LA UNPLUGGED

By Melinda Newman

Sure, Los Angeles is home to swimming pools and movie stars, but it's also a mecca for musicians. Between touring and recording, LA-based acoustic musicians make time to jam at their favorite haunts, such as Largo, where every month Sean and Sara Watkins host the Watkins Family Hour, featuring guests ranging from Jackson Browne to the Milk Carton Kids. and multiple festivals, including the Topanga Banjo Fiddle Contest & Folk Festival, and professional associations such as the Bluegrass Association of Southern California, attract acoustic guitarists from around the world.

The city has a rich history of communities brought together by song. Though his stint was brief, from 1937 to 1941, folk-legend Woody Guthrie spent formative years in LA, performing his "Oakie" tunes for prairie transplants living in Hoovervilles and on his radio show on KFVD. Up the hill, in Laurel Canyon, Joni Mitchell, David Crosby, Linda Ronstadt, Jackson Browne, Carole King, the Eagles, and many of the brightest songwriters of the late '60s and early '70s were neighbors who frequently gathered—acoustic guitars in hand—at each other's homes for all-night jam sessions. By the early 2000s, Elliott Smith had settled in Silver Lake and—alongside Devendra Banhart and Rilo Kiley—paved the way for a thriving indie-folk scene that later embraced Dawes, Father John Misty, and Local Natives.

These days, the City of Lights has a lot to offer acoustic guitarists wanting to buy a new axe, hit up an open mic, or listen to bluegrass while chowing down on pizza. Here are 12 insider-spots to experience LA unplugged.

PHOTO BY ROMAN CHO



1. Watkins Family Hour with Sara and Sean Watkins, Willie Watson, and Ed Helms 2. Pieta Brown and Don Was at McCabe's Guitar Shop 3. Truetone Music has lots of guitars—and live music 4. Cody Bryant at Cody's Viva Cantina 5. Paradise Junction at Me-N-Ed's Pizza Parlor 6. Damien Rice at The Troubador

12 must-see acoustic-mus

1 THE WATKINS FAMILY HOUR

Siblings Sean (on guitar) and Sara (on fiddle) Watkins take over the 280-seat Largo at the Coronet Theater every month or so for this convivial show that's big on special guests and even bigger on musical delight. With the homespun banter, the evening is the closest Los Angeles comes to *A Prairie Home Companion* (which is not all that surprising given that the Watkins' former Nickel Creek bandmate Chris Thile has replaced Garrison Keillor as host of that popular *NPR* radio show). On a recent night, Glen Phillips and Kevin Drew joined the Watkins siblings, bassist Sebastian Steinberg, and Heartbreakers' Benmont Tench for 90 minutes of tasty bluegrass, country covers, and originals for an evening that was as entertaining as it was informative. And don't even think about taking out your cell phone during the performance unless you want to risk incurring the wrath of owner Mark Flanagan.

366 N La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles
largo-la.com

2 MCCABE'S GUITAR SHOP

This vaunted Santa Monica haunt opened in 1958, and in many ways, it feels like nothing has changed. The cluttered, wood-paneled front room features a gorgeous assortment of guitars, mandolins, and banjos that hang on the walls, while the small, no-fuss back room (think unfinished basement) is one of the city's most intimate acoustic-concert venues. Its low-slung stage is so tiny that musicians sometimes have to stand on the adjacent staircase to let others pass by, and the tightly packed folding chairs won't win any prizes for comfort. But history seeps from the walls: For decades, it's been the place to catch such legends as Jackson Browne, Eric Clapton, Lucinda Williams, Ry Cooder, Eric Anderson, Tom Rush, John Gorka, and Tom Paxton. When the Louisiana Cajun band Beausoleil plays, the joint levitates. Get there early, since there are no reserved seats.

3101 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica
mccabes.com

3 TRUETONE MUSIC

A stone's throw from McCabe's in Santa Monica, Truetone Music may not have the history, but it's got the largest selection of guitars in town and a friendly—but not pushy—staff eager to help beginners and professionals



7. Julian Lage backstage at Hotel Cafe 8. Paul Kulak of Kulak's Woodshed 9. Bill Berry's Songwriter's Square 10. Blake Mills' pop-up shows at Mollusk Surf Shop 11. Fair Market Band at the Hollywood Farmers' Market 12. Live session at Boulevard Music

sic spaces in Los Angeles

alike navigate the 4,000-square-foot shop and test the gear. With floor-to-ceiling new and vintage instruments, it's almost as if the guitars are beckoning with songs waiting to be written. Truetone, which turns 20 next year, draws a who's who of artists who stop by to purchase guitars or have them repaired. Among the notable clientele: Keith Richards, Brad Paisley, Ry Cooder, Jackson Browne, Jakob Dylan, Carlene Carter, Brian Ray, and Rusty Anderson.
714 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica
truetonemusic.com

4 CODY'S VIVA CANTINA

Burritos, beer, and bluegrass happily coexist at Viva Cantina in Burbank, where every third Monday of the month is Bluegrass Night, courtesy of the Bluegrass Association of Southern California. Visitors have come from as far away as China to see acts such as the Brombies, a four-piece formed by guitarist Jo Ellen and mandolinist George Doering nearly 30 years ago. Other acts in rotation for one of the two stages at the cavernous Cantina include Burning Heart Bluegrass Band and the Getdown Boys. If you're not hungry, just belly up to the bar to enjoy the music. Viva Cantina is near the Equestrian Center, so it's also a fave for riders who have just gone for a trot. Bonus points for proximity to a bowling alley.
900 W. Riverside Dr., Burbank

5 ME-N-ED'S PIZZA PARLOR

Don't feel like heading to the Valley? Then head 30 miles south to Lakewood. For more than 40 of its 64 years, Me-n-Ed's has been serving pizza and bluegrass every Saturday night. Among the bands featured are the Murphy Family, Grassland, and Paradise Junction, and each has built up their own devoted following, according to management. The manager's also pretty sure that participating acts get free pizza. Everyone else has to pay. There's an arcade to keep folks occupied between sets if the $10 pitchers of beer don't do the trick.
4115 Paramount Blvd., Lakewood

6 THE TROUBADOUR

For 60 years, the iconic West Hollywood nightspot has played host to the biggest singer-songwriters and served as the nexus of the Southern California sound born in the '60s and '70s. It's here where the Byrds first played Bob Dylan's "Tambourine Man" in 1965 and Buffalo

Springfield made its debut one year later. The Troubadour's front bar is where the Eagles' Don Henley and Glenn Frey met. Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and James Taylor all played their first LA shows here. As rich a history as Doug Weston's Troubadour boasts, the 400-capacity club is not stuck in the past. The Troubadour remains a rite of passage for acts on their way up and even acts who have moved on to much bigger venues, such as Weezer, who often returns for warm-up shows or tapings. The fabled room is general admission and the best place to view a show is just to the side of the stage by the front door, although others swear by the back bar with a straight-on view to the stage. Seating upstairs, when not reserved for band guests only, offers great views, but the floor is where the action is.

9081 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood
troubadour.com

7 HOTEL CAFE

With exposed brick walls, red velvet curtains, perpetually dimmed, round light fixtures, and wood panels, this Hollywood mainstay resembles a Parisian bordello, if bordellos featured some of the hottest acoustic music in town. Owner Marko Shafer's musical policy is, "If it's good, I'll book it." He curates each night, which can feature up to four acts. (Since each artist only gets an hour on such nights, shows start on the hour and on time.) Last year, Shafer opened a 90-capacity Second Stage to complement the 200-capacity main room and to nurture smaller acts. The central location, artist-friendly vibe, and great sound makes Hotel Cafe a fave for bigger names like John Mayer or Coldplay's Chris Martin, both of whom have done surprise shows here. So have Leonard Cohen, Laura Marling, and the Lumineers. For a taste of the local scene, check out the weekly Monday Monday show at the Second Stage, where a dozen or so singer-songwriters get up to work out new material and share sets.

1623 N. Cahuenga Blvd., Los Angeles
hotelcafe.com

Kulak's Woodshed resembles your great aunt's living room where the walls are covered with mementos and the Christmas lights stay up year round.



8 KULAK'S WOODSHED

Opened by Paul Kulak in 1999 as a labor of love to support musicians, remarkably, Kulak's Woodshed is still around. I say "remarkably" because admission is free, there are no alcohol or food sales to speak of (patrons can grab a can of soda or snack and leave a donation), and Kulak pays the expenses by passing a bucket. With seating for 49, mainly mismatched old sofas and cozy chairs, Kulak's Woodshed resembles your great aunt's living room, where the walls are covered with mementos and the Christmas lights stay up year round. Monday night is open mic night, with each artist performing one song. (The order is chosen by randomly pulling names from a basket.) The free show streams live with Kulak recording every performance—for a $20 donation, acts can buy a multi-cam, 24-track copy of their appearance. The second and fourth Tuesdays of every month are also open mic, but artists are guaranteed a slot and get to perform two songs. The other nights feature single acts. Kids and pets welcome.

5230 Laurel Canyon Blvd., North Hollywood

9 SONGWRITER'S SQUARE

With its deliberately casual vibe, Songwriter's Square at the Lyric-Hyperion Theatre & Cafe, emphasizes stories over style. The third Sunday of every month, host/creator Bill Berry leads a diverse trio of singer-songwriters through an evening of music and behind-the-scenes tales, often inviting the audience to chime in with questions. The songwriters sit in a square—hence the event's name—with the audience seated in the round. Participants, which have included Lone Justice's Marvin Etzioni and folk legend Christine Lavin, are encouraged to bring their guitars, for "some terrific instrumental jams," Berry says. The menu includes beer, wine, and plenty of vegan offerings.

2106 Hyperion Ave., Los Angeles

10 BLAKE MILLS' POP-UP SHOWS AT MOLLUSK SURF SHOP

They don't happen often, but when guitar wiz/producer Blake Mills hosts his pop-up show at Mollusk, a surf shop in Silver Lake and Venice Beach, you'll want to be there. He usually brings a full electric band as well as famous friends such as Jackson Browne or former boss Lucinda Williams on acoustic guitar. The way it's worked for the last five years or so is Mills, who grew up in Malibu, calls the shop and says he's got

some musician friends in town and they want to jam. Mollusk schedules the free gig for a few days later and posts word on its website and Instagram on the day of show, as does Mills.

As the dude at the surf shop said, "They're super random," but super cool.

3511 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles
1600 Pacific Ave., Venice Beach
mollusksurfshop.com

11 HOLLYWOOD FARMERS' MARKET

Support your local farmers *and* your local musicians at one of Los Angeles' oldest farmers' markets. And bring your guitar along. The market, open Sundays from 8 a.m.–1 p.m., is one of six run by Sustainable Economic Enterprises of LA (SEELA).

Each of the four wings of the market has room for up to two acoustic guitarists, who aren't paid, but are allowed to put out a tip jar. Either go and enjoy the music or provide it yourself. According to SEELA, there's no formal application process, so proceed to the information stand at the market and ask if you can stake out a wing. If it's not taken, your chances are good.

Burritos, beer, and bluegrass happily co-exist at Viva Cantina in Burbank, where every third Monday of the month is Bluegrass Night, courtesy of the Bluegrass Association of Southern California.

SEELA's other markets, including one in Echo Park, also offer music, but not as consistently as the Hollywood locale.

1600 Ivar Ave. (near Sunset and Vine), Hollywood

12 BOULEVARD MUSIC

Acoustic guitars—and acoustic music—hold a special place at this music store at the crossroads of Culver and Sepulveda. Let's start with the repair department: Luthiers Randy Broyles, a former builder at Gallagher Guitars, and Troy Sanders, who trained under John Carruthers at the Musicians Institute in Hollywood, offer complete repair services for stringed instruments.

The store sports an impressive selection of steel-and nylon-stringed instruments, including Martin Custom Shop models as well as guitars from Martin's Golden Era and Limited Edition series. Boulevard also is a good place to pick up a Taylor koa.

And then there are those intimate concerts. Recent shows have featured guitarist and harmonica ace Pat Bergenson and his vocalist wife Annie Sellick, the Kentucky bluegrass band the Wooks, and the great flatpicker David Grier, a four-time Grammy winner whose sweet bluegrass licks will make you forget all about the traffic snarl on the Santa Monica freeway.

4316 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City
boulevardmusic.com

Melinda Newman is a contributor to Billboard, Rolling Stone, and Forbes.

JACKSON BROWNE: THE MENTOR

The first official concert at McCabe's Guitar Shop was in 1969 and featured Bryndle, a local group, with a young Jackson Browne as the opening act. "After that, we never had any reason to drive past La Cienega," says McCabe's co-owner Bob Riskin, referencing the West Hollywood folk clubs several miles from the shop. Since then, Browne has performed several times at McCabe's, but he's also a frequent visitor to Largo, where he often can be found hanging out backstage with friends and providing moral support for up-and-coming singer-songwriters.

LA photographer Roman Cho, who contributed to this feature, has encountered Browne backstage on numerous occasions. He shared a few thoughts on the pop star: "In the 14 years I've been photographing at McCabe's, he's the only artist of that stature I see showing up on a regular basis to catch a set by friends or young musicians that he likes. He often sits in with the band Jackshit, featuring his touring guitarist Val McCullum, as well as Sean and Sara Watkins at Watkins Family Hour shows at Largo and McCabe's. He's taken the Watkins on the road with him as an opener (he's done the same with Dawes) and will be touring with them this spring on an acoustic tour. He's sat in on the Mollusk Surf Shop jam sessions with Blake Mills and even sat in with a Gypsy-jazz band at the tiny Cinema Bar. At a time in his career when many of his contemporaries seem to be resting on their laurels and staying in their circle of friends or pursuing hobbies and interests, Jackson Browne is still devoted to music and is very active in supporting younger musicians."



ROMAN CHO

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Play like Alvin Youngblood Hart

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The full story on partial capos

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Acoustic Classic
Gabriel Kahane's 'LA' story

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A modern guitar duo: 'Lion's Share'

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How to play an Eric Bibb blues tune



Paul Simon: Master of the major and minor triads

THE BASICS

Playing in Perfect Harmony

5 steps toward developing chord fluency on the fretboard

BY GRETCHEN MENN

THE PROBLEM

You want to expand your harmonic vocabulary and improve your ability to visualize chords on the fretboard.

THE SOLUTION

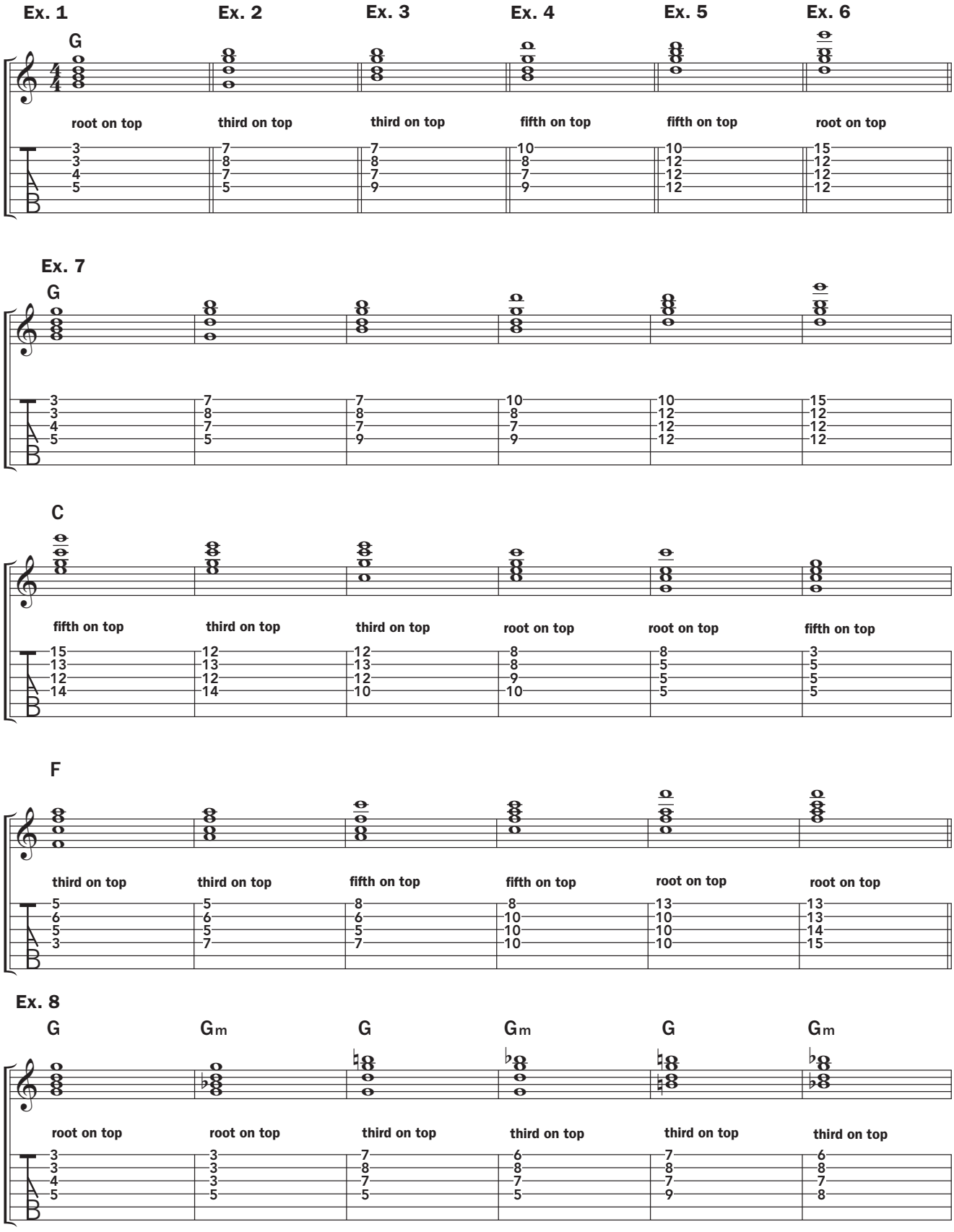
Use a little music theory to learn how major and minor triads are built and to start connecting chord shapes. With an awareness of how these chords work, you'll be primed to play songs as diverse as the Who's "Substitute" and Paul Simon's "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard"—and to create your own chord progressions and solos.

1 LEARN THE NOTES ON THE FRETBOARD

If your knowledge of the notes on the fretboard is questionable, take the time to learn and memorize them. All of them. Start with one string, counting your way up and down the neck and saying each note as you play it. Move to other strings as you gain confidence. Mix it up and quiz yourself. Once you know the entire fretboard, you'll probably find it so helpful that you'll wonder why you didn't do it sooner.

2 BRUSH UP ON YOUR THEORY

Many musicians are convinced that theory is unnecessary and even antithetical to their creative mojo. But I can't emphasize enough how much will open up to you from learning it. It won't make you less inventive or interfere with your enjoyment of music. If anything, it will deepen your appreciation and foster your independence. Shedding any


Ex. 1
Ex. 2
Ex. 3
Ex. 4
Ex. 5
Ex. 6
G
root on top
third on top
third on top
fifth on top
fifth on top
root on top
Ex. 7
G
C
fifth on top
third on top
third on top
root on top
root on top
fifth on top
F
third on top
third on top
fifth on top
fifth on top
root on top
root on top
Ex. 8
G
Gm
G
Gm
G
Gm
root on top
root on top
third on top
third on top
third on top
third on top

apprehension and diving into the building blocks of music will be incredibly freeing.

Though you could spend years or even a lifetime studying music theory, here are a few fundamental concepts you need to know. Not all of these points will be discussed directly in this lesson, but they're necessary for understanding the bigger picture. (If theory is new to you, I suggest getting a book, teacher, or online tutorial to supplement these brief points.)

There are 12 notes in Western music, alphabetically from A to G: A, A♯/B♭, B, C, C♯/D♭, D, D♯/E♭, E, F, F♯/G♭, G, G♯/A♭. These notes are all a half step apart (the equivalent of one fret). Notice the half steps that occur between two pairs of natural notes: B–C and E–F.

Accidentals raise or lower a note by a half step. A sharp (♯) raises a note a half step; a flat (♭) lowers a note a half step. And a natural (♮) negates a previous sharp or flat.

The term enharmonic equivalent refers to two notes that are spelled differently, but are the same pitch. The context will dictate how a note is written. For instance, an A♯ (a half step up from A) is the same note as a B♭ (a half step down from B).

A scale is a pattern of half and whole steps that creates a characteristic sound. The most common scales in Western music are the major and the natural minor. The major scale is built from the following combination of whole and half steps: W, W, H, W, W, W, H. So the C major scale, for instance, is spelled C D E F G A B and G major is G A B C D E F♯.

Chords can be built from the notes within each scale. The simplest chords are triads, made of three notes: a root, a third, and a fifth. The root is the foundational note of the chord. If the root is C, the chord will be some kind of C (major, minor, augmented, diminished). To keep things simple, we'll focus on major and minor triads. A major triad differs from its minor counterpart only in the third degree. If the third is two whole steps from the root, as in the case of C to E, it's a major triad. If the third is one and a half steps from the root, as in C to E♭, it's minor. The notes of a triad can be repeated in different octaves and can occur in any order. If a note other than the root is at the bottom, then that triad is in an inversion.

3 TAKE IT TO THE NECK

Now, start building and connecting chords on the guitar. Play on the top four strings and work your way up and down the fretboard. As you go through these first six examples, notice how the shapes connect, with certain notes in common as others move upward.

Start with a G-major triad (indicated with a G-chord symbol) with the root on top and bottom, as shown in **Ex. 1**. Your first finger replaces your third finger on the fifth-fret G and you now have the third (B) on top in **Ex. 2**. In **Ex. 3**, notice how you have three notes in common with the voicing in Ex. 2, with just the lowest note moving, from G to B. Fret the fifth (high D) with your fourth finger for a new voicing in **Ex. 4**. Swap out your fourth finger for your first on string 1 to create another voicing with the fifth on top (**Ex. 5**), then partially bar fret 12, keeping three notes in common and grabbing the fifth with your fourth finger on string 1 for **Ex. 6**.

Many musicians are convinced that theory is unnecessary and even antithetical to their creative mojo. But I can't emphasize enough how much will open up to you from learning it.

4 CONNECT DIFFERENT KEYS

Once you've become comfortable with the voicings in Exs. 1–6, extend the exercise by changing keys. In **Ex. 7**, climb the neck using inversions of a G-major triad. Then move to the nearest voicing of C major, and descend through voicings of that triad. After that, move up to the nearest voicing of F major, and so forth.

5 CHANGE CHORDS

Remember all that stuff about thirds determining the quality of the chord? If you skimmed or thought it might be irrelevant, think again. This is exactly why a little investment in the rudiments of theory really pays off. Move the third down a half step in each now-familiar major chord, and behold: you've transformed it to minor.

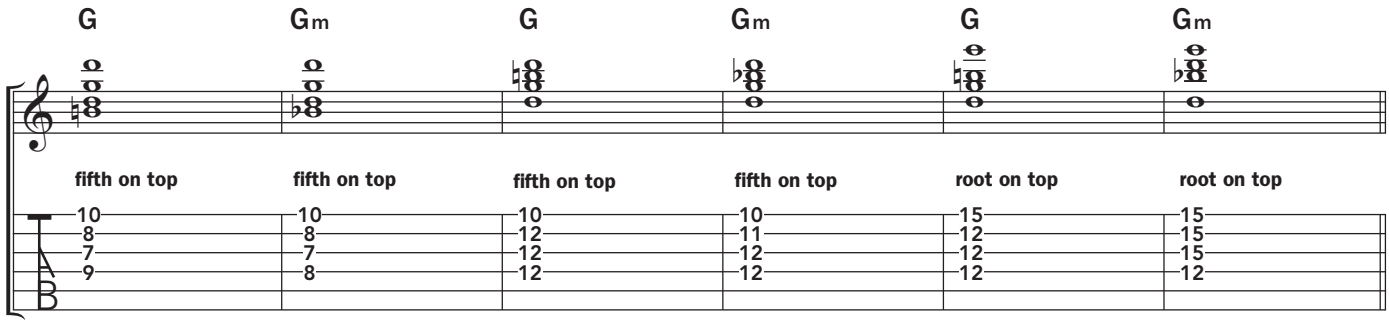
Locate the third (B) of each G chord in **Ex. 8**. Move it down a half step, to B♭, for six G minor (Gm) voicings. Once you've studied these voicings and have them in your brain and under your fingers, make use of your new vocabulary by playing chord progressions you know. Better yet, write some new progressions. Rather than sliding a shape around horizontally on the neck, try staying in one position to create smooth harmonic movement, or even a chord melody. As always, make this new knowledge relevant to what you are doing by writing with it and letting it enrich and inspire you.

Gretchen Menn is a guitarist and composer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She writes, records, and performs original music and is a member of the popular Led Zeppelin tribute band Zepparella. gretchenmenn.com

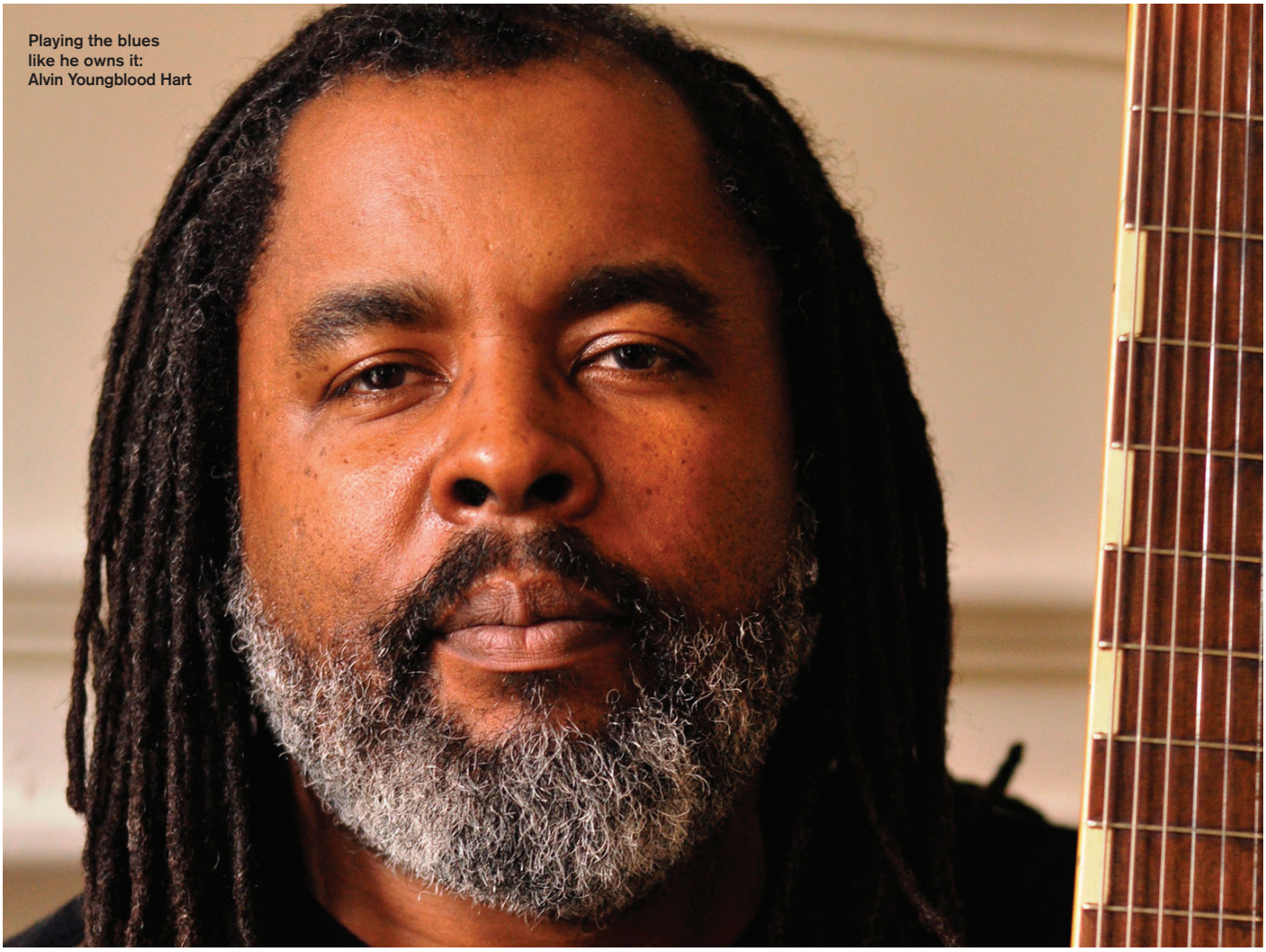
ACOUSTIC GUITAR ACOUSTIC ROCK EXPLORATIONS

This is part of an ongoing series titled *Acoustic Rock Explorations* available at store.AcousticGuitar.com.

Ex. 8 Cont.




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Playing the blues like he owns it: Alvin Youngblood Hart

Play the Blues Like Alvin Youngblood Hart

A look inside the style and open tunings of this contemporary bluesman

BY PETE MADSEN

On one hand, *Big Mama's Door* (Okeh/Sony)—Alvin Youngblood Hart's critically acclaimed 1996 debut album—is like a haunted relic of prewar blues with its covers of Charley Patton ("Pony Blues") and Leadbelly ("The Gallis Pole"). But on the other hand, originals like "Joe Friday," referencing the 1960s television series *Dragnet*, snap us forward in time.

Hart takes a similarly varied approach on his other albums as a leader, from *Territory* (1998) to *Motivational Speaker* (2005), his last solo album. (He continues to tour solo and has recorded on a variety of side projects.) He splits his time between acoustic blues and classic-rock-inspired formats, which can leave some folks scratching their heads. But make no mistake: He always plays the blues like he owns it.

Like a lot of guitarists in the 1960s and '70s, Hart—who spent his formative years in Oakland, California—first discovered music through such rock, pop, and R&B bands as Humble Pie, Thin Lizzy, and the Jackson 5. (Hart even went on to tour with former Thin Lizzy guitarist Gary Moore.) He was also exposed to early blues by his parents—and especially by his grandparents when he visited them in Mississippi. And he spent time in Chicago, playing with some of the elders of the blues scene and earning the name "Youngblood."

IRRESISTIBLE GROOVES IN OPEN G

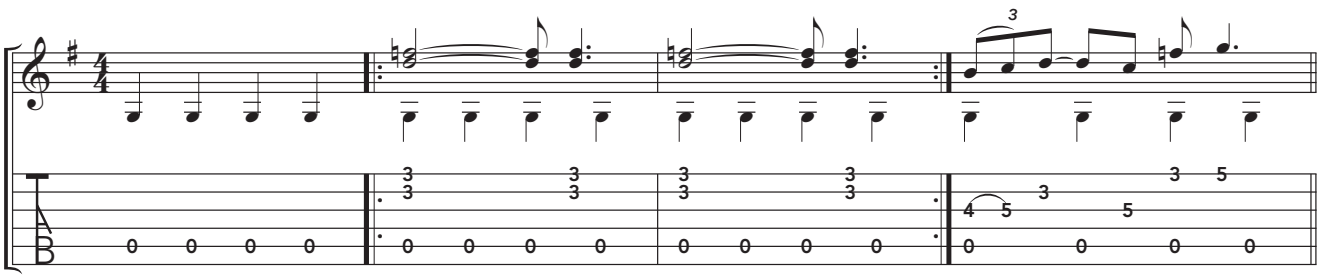
In his acoustic playing, Hart mines the sonic territory of such blues players as Patton, Robert Johnson, Skip James, and others. He

Tuning: D G D G B D
(Examples 1–6)

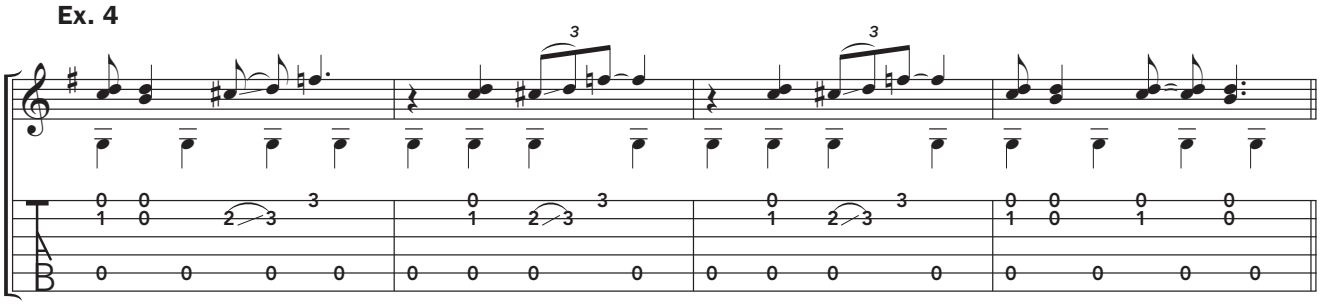
Ex. 1

Ex. 2

Ex. 3

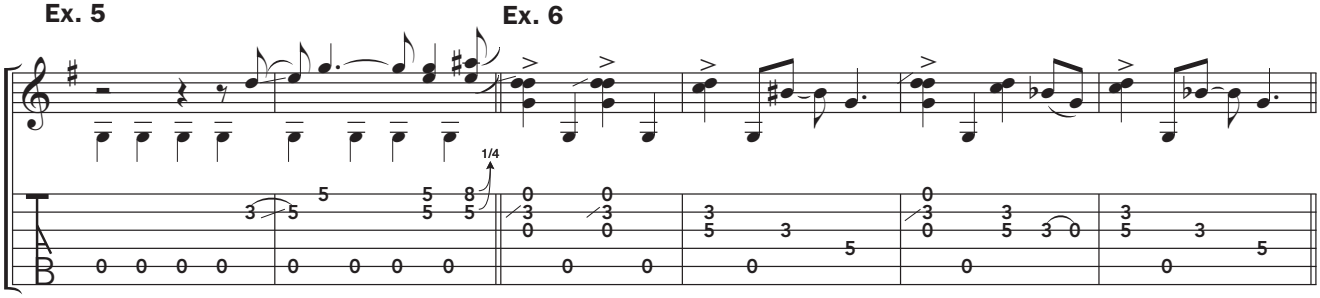


Ex. 4



Ex. 5

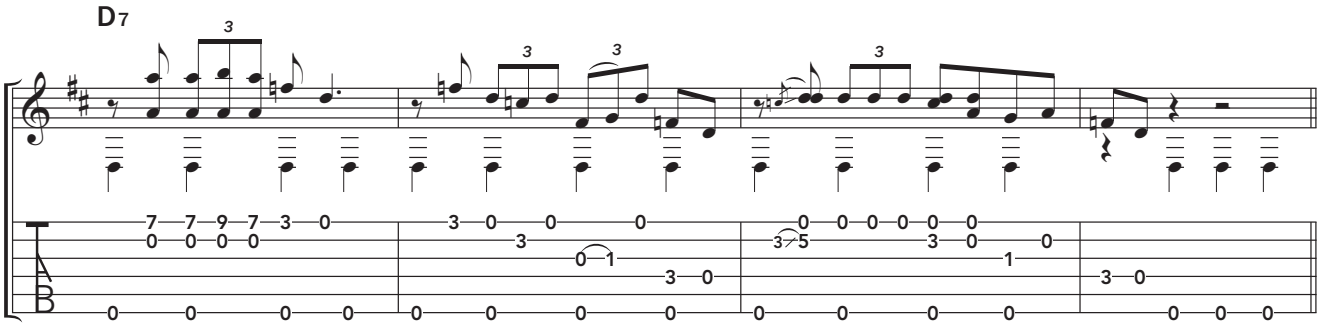
Ex. 6



Tuning: D A D F♯ A D
(Examples 7–11)

Ex. 7

D7



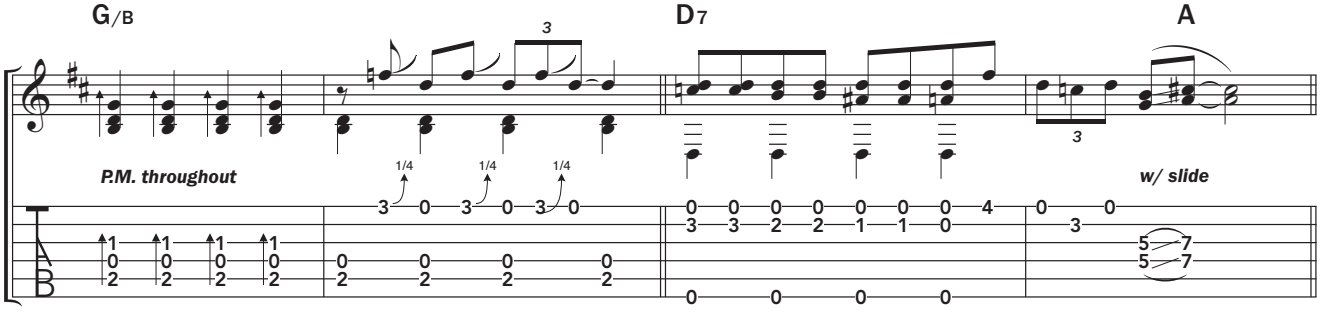
Ex. 8

G/B

Ex. 9

D7

A



uses open-G (or open-A) and open-D tunings, often in conjunction with a capo, to put his own stamp on the music. He plays fingerstyle without a pick, on Fraulini and National six-string guitars, as well as various 12-strings, and he leans heavily on single-chord grooves with monotonic bass patterns, in which his picking hand's thumb thumps out a constant four-beat rhythm.

Let's start out with a few exercises that will get you acclimated to playing monotonic grooves. For the first set of exercises, you'll be in open-G (low to high: D G D G B D), with everything falling over the I chord (G7). Later, you'll switch to open-D.

In **Ex. 1**, play a simple monotonic bass in quarter notes on the open fifth string (G). Keep the bass going in **Ex. 2** as you add a double stop on beat 1 and the "and" of 3. For the proper groove, be sure to use a metronome. In **Ex. 3**, there's a more syncopated groove with an eighth-note triplet and a hammer-on. Play the hammer-on with your second and third fingers, and the third-fret notes with your first finger.

Hart tends to limit himself to the first five frets to create irresistible grooves. **Ex. 4** is similar to what he plays in the instrumental "Amazed 'N' Amused" from *Big Mama's Door*. You can play this riff with just one finger—your first—on all the fretted notes. Also inspired by "Amazed 'N' Amused," **Ex. 5** is similar to a move that Robert Johnson would make in this tuning. Interestingly enough, it can function either as an extension of the I chord or reflect a IV chord change. In this example it's more like an extension of the I chord.

Make no mistake: He always plays the blues like he owns it.

Ex. 6 is a nod to the opening of "Big Mama's Door" and has a sort of choppy sound. To get that sound, emphasize beats 1 and 3 by plucking the strings with a combination of your index, middle, and ring fingers. Then use your thumb to play the notes on beats 2 and 4 with percussive downstrokes.

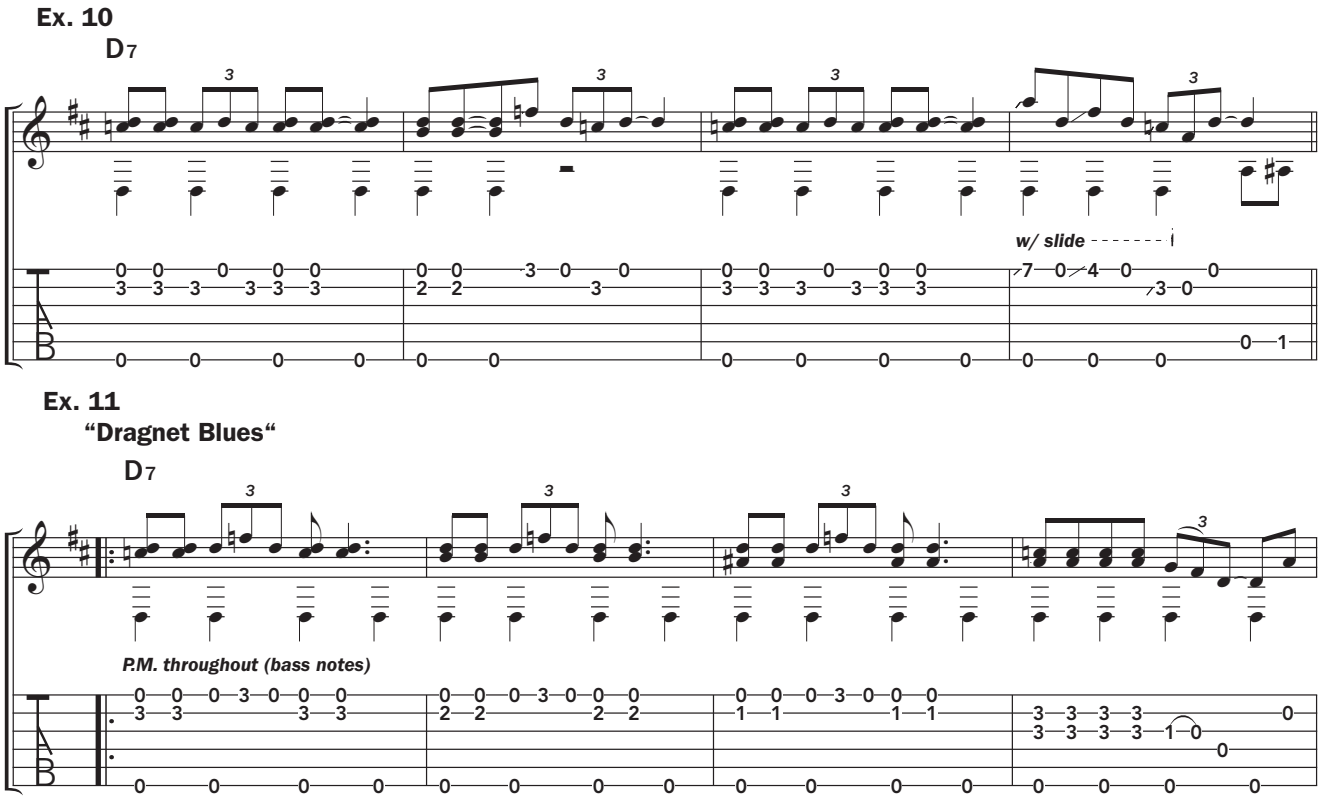
OPEN-D MAGIC

Now let's explore Hart's work in open-D tuning, in a series of exercises in the key of D major. The guitarist plays monotonic bass on "If Blues Was Money," which has a riff similar to **Ex. 7**. Against the bass line, play a descending minor run on the first string that resolves over the second, third, and fourth strings. This kind of groove, even though it's in a major tuning, is reminiscent of such celebrated Skip James songs as "Devil Got My Woman" and "Hard Time Killing Floor Blues," in D- or E-minor tunings.

Ex. 8 is patterned after what Hart plays over the IV chord (G) in "If Blues Was Money." In the first measure, use a heavy palm mute—rest the side of your picking hand's palm on the strings as you brush the G chord with your thumb. In the second measure, fret the first-string F with your third or fourth finger and give just a slight upward push to produce a quarter-step bend.

SLIDE ON IN

Now it's time to break out the slide. Hart favors a glass bottleneck on his fourth finger, but you can use any type of slide to play **Ex. 9**, which is informed by the intro and turnaround from "Joe Friday." Start off with a descending run on the second string and play a quick tritone (F♯ and C, implying a D7 chord) before sliding into the double stop on the V chord (A).



Ex. 10 is similar to the verse of "Joe Friday." It echoes the descending line from the turnaround before it veers up the neck for a slide phrase that descends from the fifth (A) to the third (F♯) to the flatted seventh (C). Hold your slide low—towards the ground—to produce the notes on the first string.

Hart's open-D ideas are put together in **Ex. 11**, which I'll call "Dragnet Blues." The first five bars borrow the descending line from "Joe Friday," but extend it down the second string and punctuate it with a double stop. Play this five-bar lick twice, on the second pass with a walk up to the IV chord.

The IV-chord (G7) phrase is typical of "Joe Friday" and "If Blues Was Money." Revisit the double-stop lick for the I chord, but in the second bar, play some triplets for more emphasis. Hart doesn't usually play the V chord, but I threw in a line borrowed from Blind Blake's "Police Dog Blues." The phrase gets away from the monotonic bass with a more syncopated lick typical of Blind Blake. The last three measures take you through the IV, I, and V chords, respectively.

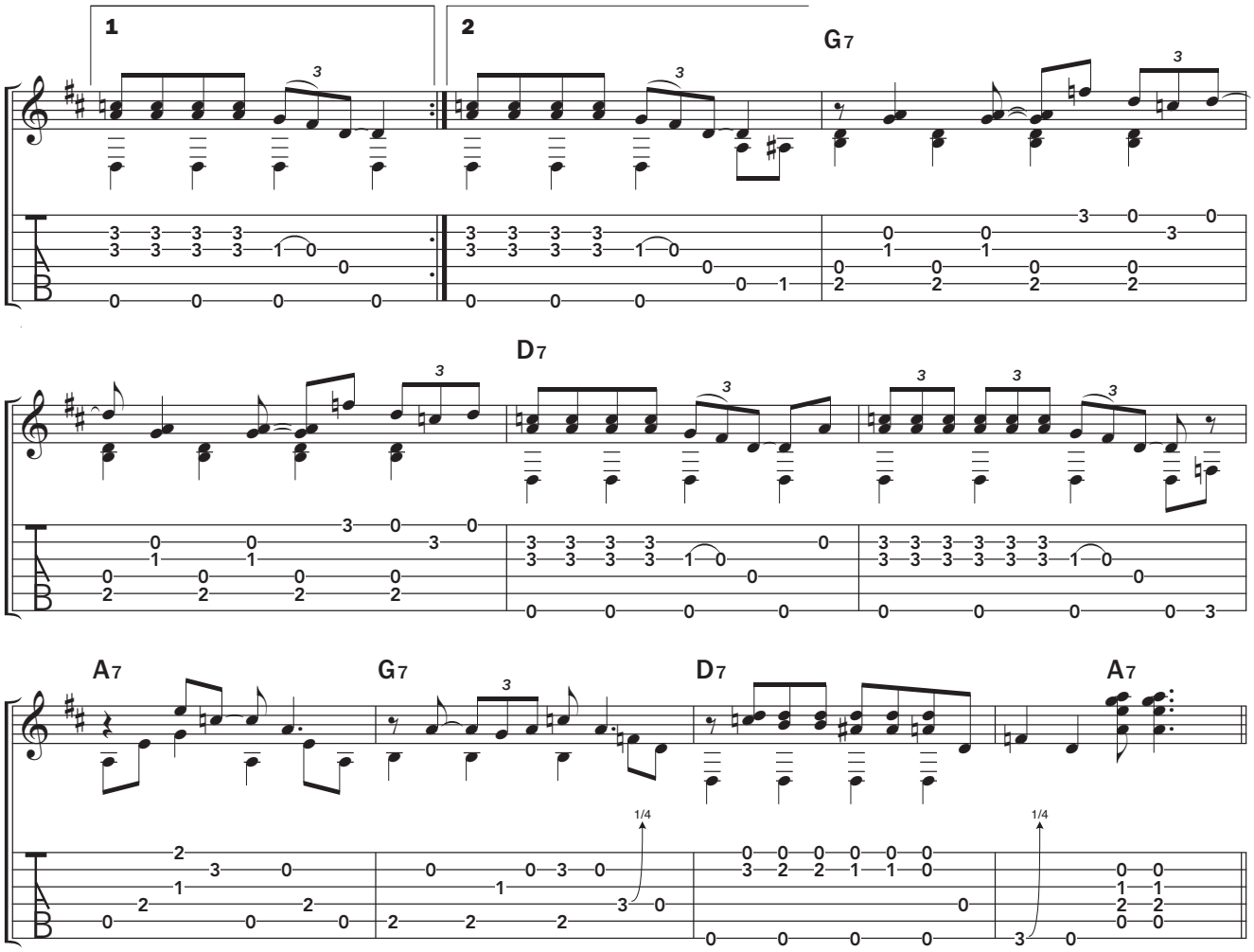
Have a listen to *Big Mama's Door* and *Down in the Alley*—Hart's all-acoustic albums—to get a feel and ear for his music. A lot of what he plays is based on prewar blues, but he also mines hillbilly tunes, country, rock, and just about anything else that inspires him. You'll notice he doesn't restrict himself to the 12-bar form; his music is very open-ended. As you put your effort to learning these songs, just remember: Capturing the feel and learning some of the licks is much more important than playing everything note-for-note.

Pete Madsen is a San Francisco Bay Area-based guitarist, author, and educator who specializes in acoustic blues, ragtime, and slide guitar. learnbluesguitarnow.com

ACOUSTIC GUITAR **PLAY THE BLUES** LIKE . . .



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Gimme Five (Strings)

Open up new doors by using a partial capo

BY JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS



A partial capo can unlock new possibilities on the fretboard.

If you're drawn to the creative possibilities of alternate tunings but don't want to completely lose your bearings on the fingerboard, a partial capo may be just the ticket, no matter what your skill level. Like an alternate tuning, a partial capo changes the intervals between the open strings, enabling you to find chord voicings and melodic ideas that might not have occurred to you—or wouldn't be possible—with standard tuning or a standard capo. And yet with a partial capo you can keep your strings in standard tuning, so that when you fret notes above the capo, everything works in the usual way. Much of what you know how to play still applies. A partial capo provides, in many ways, an ideal mix of the familiar and the unexpected.

For performing, too, partial capos are a great tool, since they allow you to switch quickly into an alternate-tuning-type setup and then back to standard while sparing you—and your audience—a lot of retuning time.

You can find partial capos in many varieties, typically covering five, four, or three strings while leaving the others open. For the uninitiated, a great starting place is a five-string capo. You can buy a capo designed for this purpose, such as the Shubb C8, Kyser Drop-D, D'Addario/Planet Waves NS Drop Tune, Liberty Flip Model 65, or G7th Newport Partial #5. (Also, the Spider capo allows you to choose which strings to leave open, so it can handle any partial capo configuration.) These models will be the most stable for five-string capoing, but you can also try out this setup with any regular capo that doesn't wrap completely around the neck. Just place the capo off center to leave one string open.

So check out some of the enticing sounds you can get with five-string capoing.

WEEK ONE

The most common use of the five-string capo is what's often called a drop-D capo position. With your guitar in standard tuning, place a capo at the second fret covering the top five strings; leave the sixth string un-capoed. Hold down a D-chord shape, as in **Ex. 1,** strum all six strings, and listen to that big, lush sound—much fuller than the D chord you normally play with the root on the fourth string. Switch to a Dm shape, as shown, and again revel in the ring of all those low open strings.

Now try the other chords in the example: G, A, F, and C. If the shapes look and sound familiar, that's because they are exactly the same as in standard tuning—you *are* in standard tuning. The only time the partial capo affects the sound is when you leave the sixth string open.

In **Ex. 2,** put a few of these shapes into practice in a short progression from D to G to A. On the D, you've got that low bass note on the sixth string, but the G and A are the standard open chords, unaffected by the partial capo.

WEEK TWO

As with drop-D tuning, you can play sweet-sounding bass runs with this partial capo position. That's the focus in **Ex. 3,** inspired by Gillian Welch's "Tear My Stillhouse Down." Throughout this example, mix bass notes and strums—go from chord to chord via runs on the bottom three strings. For the quarter-step bends, give the string a slight pull (toward the treble side of the neck) for a little bluesy edge.

You could play essentially this same pattern in drop-D tuning, but the nice thing about the partial capo is that your G note on the sixth string is in its usual spot, three frets above the capo. If you were in drop-D, you'd have to slide up to the fifth fret to reach that bass note.

WEEK THREE

One wrinkle with the five-string capo comes when you want to play an E-chord shape or anything else that would normally use the open sixth string. With the partial capo, the open sixth string is effectively lowered by a whole step—it rings two frets below the capo. So if you're playing an E shape and want a sixth-string bass note, you need to fret the sixth string *alongside* the capo. If you

Beginners' Tip #1

Although people call this a drop-D capo position, remember that the capo raises the pitches by a whole step, so a D shape sounds as an E.

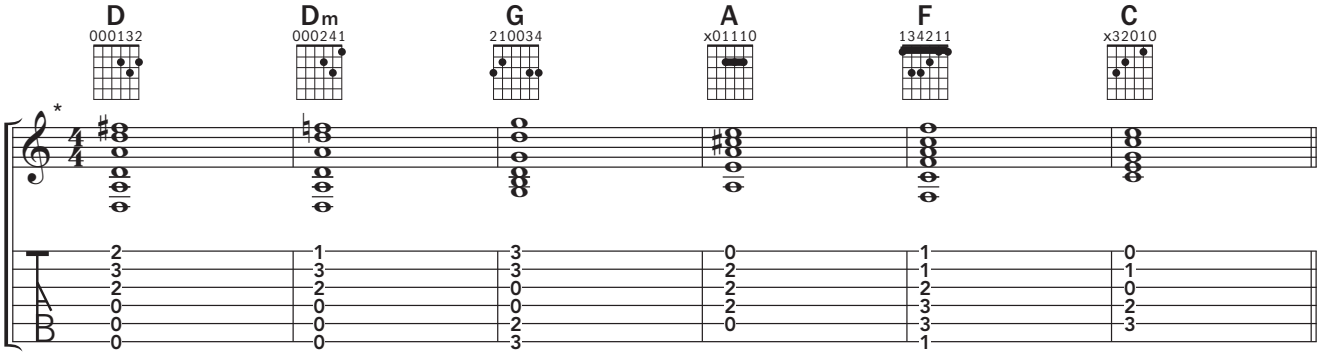
Beginners' Tip #2

The chords in Ex. 3 have only roots and fifths (no thirds)—that's why they are named 5 chords.

Capo II (strings 1–5)

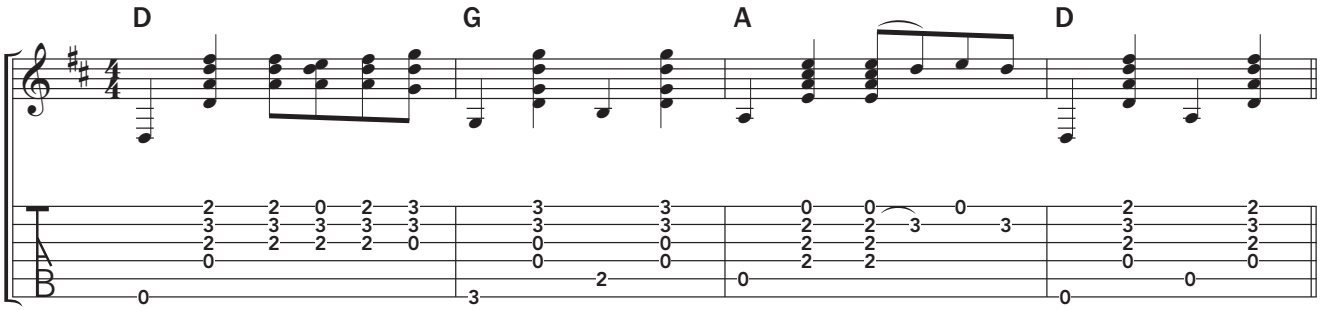
WEEK 1

Ex. 1



**Music sounds at pitch; capoed fret is zero.*
On string 6 in tablature, zero is actual open string.

Ex. 2



WEEK 2

Ex. 3



think of the capo position as zero, essentially you're holding down the zero fret. It's a somewhat awkward maneuver, but gets easier with practice.

Ex. 4, a progression similar to James Taylor's "Carolina in My Mind," includes a few E-minor shapes with the sixth string fretted alongside the capo. Start on a D to G, then walk down the sixth string from G to Em. For the Em, fret the fifth and fourth strings with your third and fourth fingers, and grab the sixth string with your first. Your first should be in front of the capo (toward the soundhole), angled so the fingertip reaches over to the second fret. If you can move the capo a bit further from the fret (toward the nut) and still get a clean sound, you'll make more room for your first finger to get in this position.

The example goes three times between Em and A—that gives you more practice fretting alongside the capo. Then in measures 3 and 4, play a descending bass line starting from the open fourth string. Wrap up the example with a JT-esque hammer-on/pull-off figure, bolstered by the low bass note on the sixth string, thanks to the partial capo.

Beginners' Tip #3

Throughout Ex. 4, let the bass notes ring as long as possible.

WEEK FOUR

To wrap up this introduction to partial capoing, play an example inspired by the Grateful Dead's "Althea." The main chord progression of this Deadhead favorite goes Bm–A–E–A, and neither Jerry Garcia nor Bob Weir used a capo—their whole style relied on having the freedom to travel anywhere on the neck at any time, rather than being fixed in one position. But when I was arranging "Althea" for Vol. 2 of my Homespun video series on Dead songs for solo-acoustic guitar, I used the five-string partial capo because it gave me a lot of freedom to use open strings and add lead lines. With the capo at the second fret, the main chord shapes became Am–G–D5–G, as shown in **Ex. 5**.

Because of the partial capo, you have an open bass string for the Am shape—in measures 2 and 6, walk up to it chromatically on the sixth string. To deepen the groove, use a little palm muting (rest your picking hand palm lightly on the bass strings near or on top of the bridge). In measures 4 and 7, take advantage of the capoed open strings by adding some short single-note phrases. In my full arrangement of "Althea," I carry this idea further with instrumental interludes that mix single-note soloing with bass notes and chords, in a way that would be tough to pull off without the partial capo.

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg of what you can do with the five-string capo. Take advantage of the open-string bass notes by moving up the neck on the treble strings. Experiment with the partial capo in other positions, too—put it at the fourth fret and play a C shape with the sixth string open, or put it at the seventh fret and play A or Am shapes, again with the open sixth string. You can also flip the capo around to leave the first string open rather than the sixth. With any of these setups, you'll quickly discover nonstandard sounds—without leaving standard tuning.

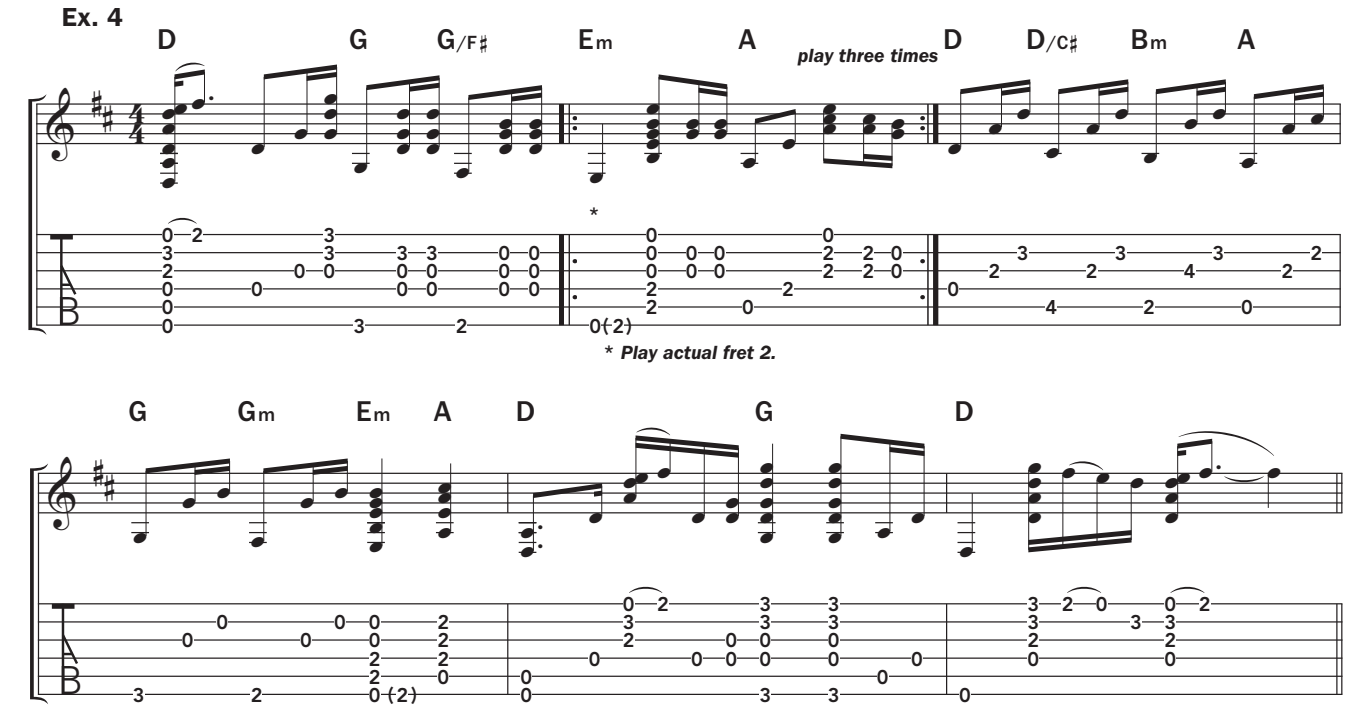
Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers, Acoustic Guitar's founding editor, is the author of The Complete Singer-Songwriter, *just published in an expanded second edition, and the video series Learn Seven Grateful Dead Classics for Acoustic Guitar. jeffreypepperrodgers.com*

Beginners' Tip #4

For the Xs in the Ex. 5 notation, mute the strings with your fretting fingers and strike them percussively with your pick.

WEEK 3

Ex. 4



WEEK 4

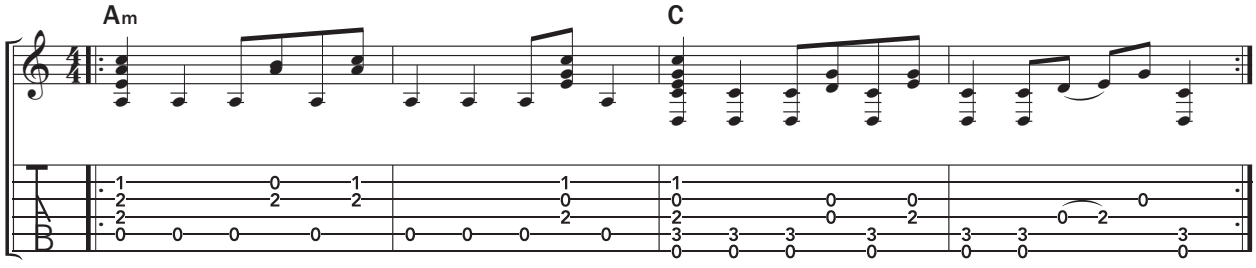
Ex. 5



TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

You can expand the range of a five-string partial capo by tuning the sixth string down to D or C, for example. One of my songs, "Turn Away," uses a five-string capo at the second fret, as in this lesson, but with the sixth string down to D. This way, when you play a C shape (which sounds as a D), You get an open bass note on the sixth string that adds real depth to the sound. Try a little sample just by moving between Am and C shapes.

Tuning: D A D G B E
Capo II (strings 1–5)





Gabriel Kahane

LA Story

Exploring Gabriel Kahane's chronicle of the City of Angels

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Los Angeles is a rich source of inspiration for the Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter and composer Gabriel Kahane. Each of the selections on his 2014 song-cycle album, *The Ambassador* (Sony Masterworks), is named after a specific address in LA and depicts the city from the perspective of a fictional or real character. And his song "LA," from *Where Are the Arms* (2011), neatly details the less glamorous aspects of city life there. For the original recording, Kahane crafted a shimmering arrangement comprised of twin steel-string guitars, piano strings articulated with a guitar pick, and electric guitar (played by mandolin virtuoso Chris Thile, who also covered background vocals). This arrangement distills the accompaniment to a single guitar. The song is fingered in the key of C major but, owing to a capo at the fourth fret, sounds a major third higher than written—in E, lending a more subdued and delicate character.

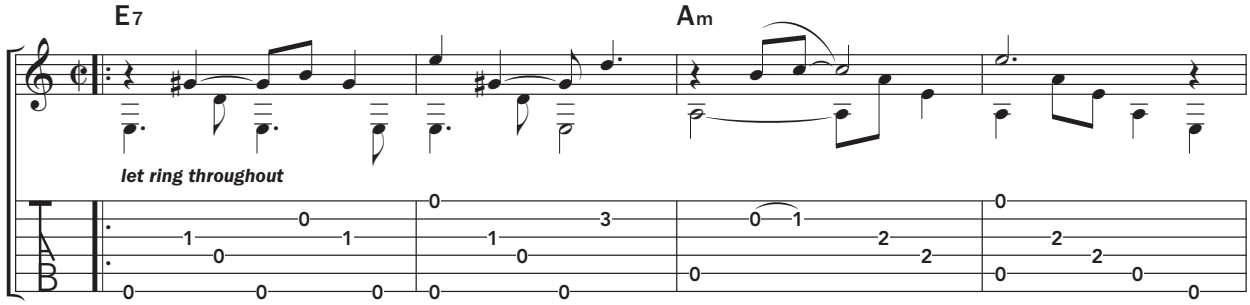
"LA" has a curious harmonic structure: The intro, verse, and interlude—which share the same chord progression—all start on a secondary dominant (V7/vi, or E7) and meander through a series of other chords before finally settling down on the tonic (C) in the seventh bar. The effect is a bit disorienting—in a good way. Although you could strum "LA," the song is best played with fingerpicking. This arrangement uses a slightly different picking-hand pattern in each section.

Alternatively, play the whole song with any other pattern(s) you'd like—Travis picking would work well, for example. Whichever approach you use, just make sure to hold each chord shape for its full value, most often two measures long, and to use a delicate touch.

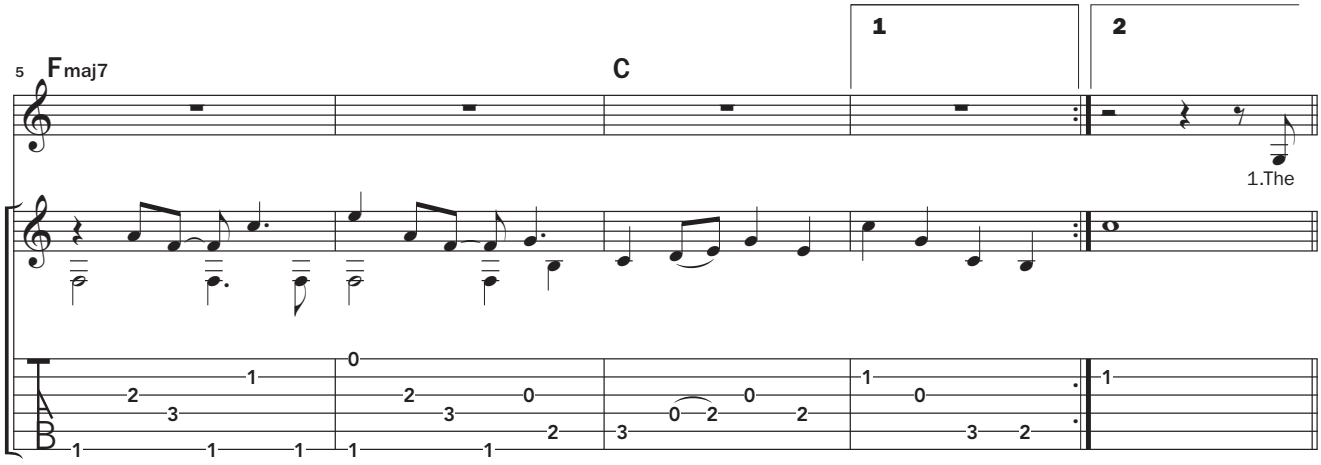


***Capo IV**

Intro



**Music sounds a major third higher than written; capoed fret is 0 in tablature.*



𝄋 Verse

Guitar continues same as intro



col - or wheel and the west - ern sky. The re - flec - tion of a strang-

2., 3. *See additional lyrics.*



- er in a strange fluo - res - cent light. There's wa - ter on the bath - room floor.



A mat - tress for an is - land and a plas - tic sheet for shore. L.A.

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Chorus
G
Dm9
C
L. A.
L. A.
Gm
D/F♯
L. A.
L. A.
L. A.,
To Coda 1
To Coda 2
1
2
F
G
C
the self - ish cit - y wins a - gain.
The
Bridge
Fmaj9
Am7
Fmaj9
wind - screen is a cin - e - ma to - night.
The shot of



2. She drives 'cause there's a lot of road
 And motion makes her calmer than to take it slow
 The man puts on the yellow gloves
 She concentrates discretely on the TV up above

3. The bungalow gets a splash of sun
 She opens up the front door when the man is done
 Water on the bathroom floor
 Tub's been up for days now and I can't see anymore

Two's Company

Learn to play 'Lion's Share,' a new composition by the modern guitar duo of Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER



Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge

Not long ago, the bright young guitarists Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge—their prewar Martin guitars and BlueChip plectrums at hand—sat down and recorded a bunch of free improvisations on an iPhone. Then they used many of the ideas as kernels for new tunes. One of the improvisations—"Lion's Share"—suggested a fully formed piece, so Lage and Eldridge re-recorded it note-for-note for their newly released album *Mount Royal* (Free Dirt).

"Lion's Share" is a deceptively simple study in the key of C and in 6/8 time—that's six eighth notes per bar. Eldridge handles the rhythm chores, sitting mostly on a C chord and briefly visiting the ♭III (E♭maj7), while Lage explores dyads that lend harmonic complexity.

Eldridge chose to play the C chord at the eighth fret, to get a relatively dark timbre. His part might look easy on paper, but it takes skill to play these repetitive arpeggios smoothly and with the proper groove. Use whatever pick strokes feel most natural. Set a metronome to eighth notes, and really try to lock in with each click. On beat 1 of the pattern that starts in bar 1, play the 16th notes not evenly as written, but give them a little swing, with the first 16th a hint longer than the second.

Lage takes the, um, lion's share of the piece. His part is best played with hybrid picking. For each dyad on non-adjacent strings, sound the lower note with your pick and the higher one with your middle finger. (For more on hybrid picking, see the Basics lesson in the April issue of *AG*.)

As you play through Lage's lines, be sure to listen carefully to the interesting sonorities resulting from the superimpositions on the C chord—for example, implying a C7♭9 and then a C9 in bar 5; in the following measure, Cm7 followed by C7.

Eldridge and Lage maintain the same division of labor throughout "Lion's Share," but you might try swapping roles when playing the piece with a fellow guitarist. Use the transcription as a general guide for structuring your own improvisations and not as a strict script. AG

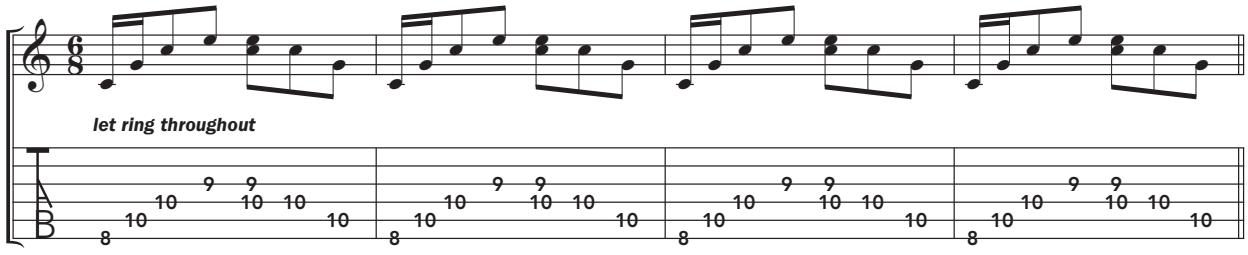


Intro

Moderately

C

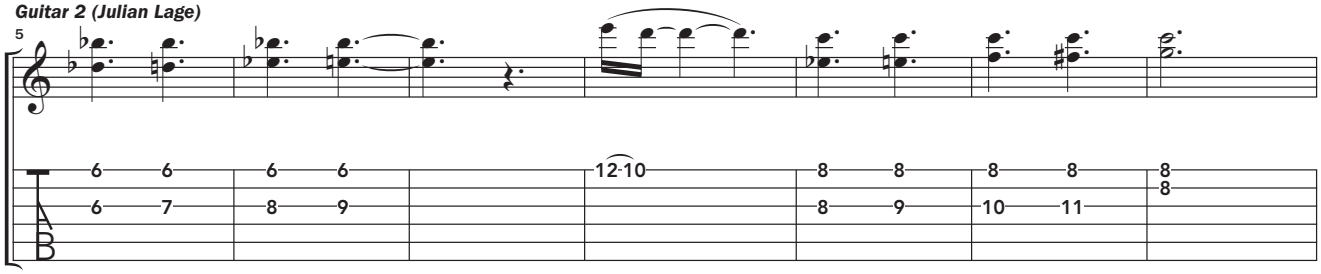
Guitar 1 (Chris Eldridge)

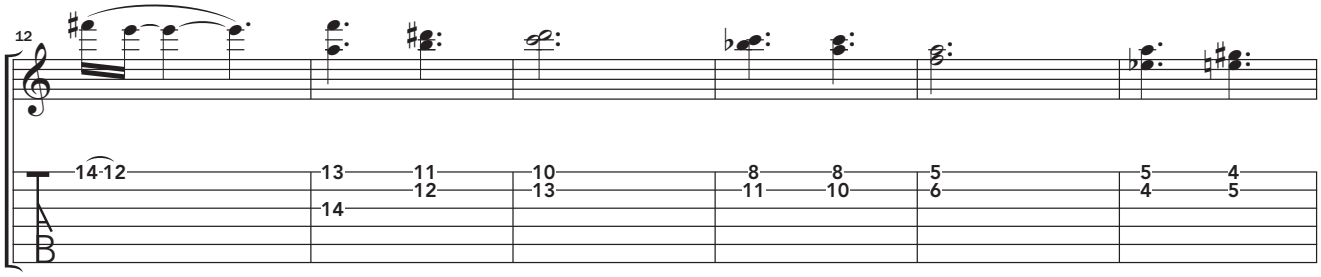


A

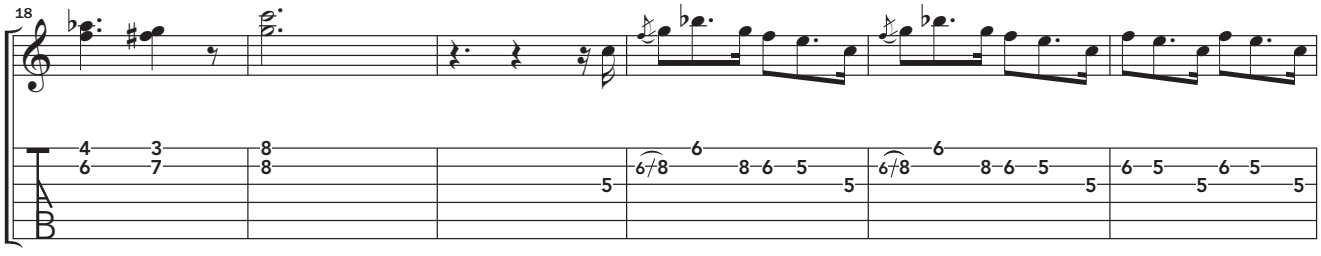
Guitar 1 cont. simile

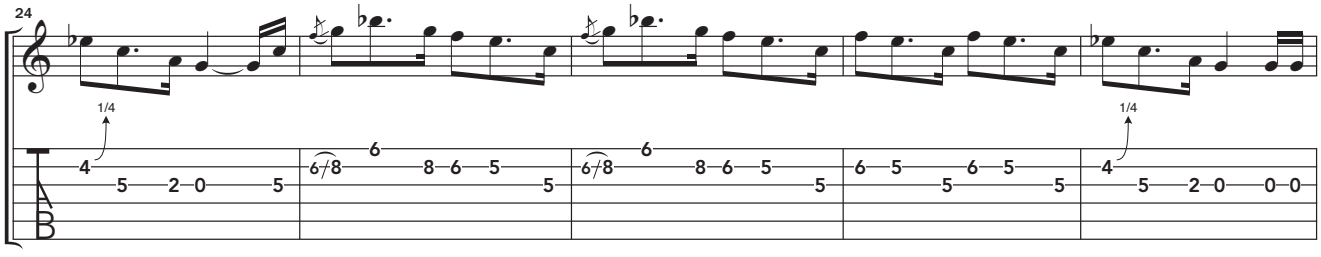
Guitar 2 (Julian Lage)





To Coda





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B
E♭maj7
C
29
Guitar 2
Guitar 1
E♭maj7
G7
33
C
B♭
C
37


E♭maj7
C
41
4:3
4:3
E♭maj7
G7
C
45
1/4
B♭
C
D.S. al Coda
Coda
50
53

WATCH ERIC BIBB PLAY 'TURNER STATION'
ACOUSTICGUITAR.COM/TAG/MAY-2017



Eric Bibb

Station Master

Eric Bibb makes the most of a simple blues groove in the infectious song 'Turner Station'

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

A few years ago, the blues guitarist Eric Bibb was walking down Haight Street in San Francisco when a Gretsch Jim Dandy called to him from a shop window. Bibb ventured inside to find three other Jim Dandys in stock and snatched up the one that spoke to him the most. That same day, Bibb brought the guitar to film a performance of his song "Turner Station" for the *Acoustic Guitar Sessions* series and made this $150 instrument sound like a million bucks.

Bibb plays the song in drop-D tuning and places a capo at the second fret, causing the piece to sound in the key of E minor. The music is notated as fingered, meaning everything, including the chord symbols, sounds a major second higher than written.

The notation and tab, based on the studio version from 2014's *Blues People* (Stony Plain), contain everything you need to play the song. Begin by tackling the main riff that appears throughout. Strum or pick all the notes on strings 6 and 5 with your thumb, and use your index finger to articulate the notes on string 4. Try snapping the string a little each time you see a single note on the fourth string. As for the fretting hand, the ¼ symbols call for quarter-step bends. Nudge the string or strings slightly, toward the floor, such that the pitch is raised.

At the end of each verse, Bibb goes for a jazzier sound by calling the half-diminished seventh chord (a diminished triad with a minor seventh, or 1 ♭3 ♭5 ♭7) into service. There's a pair of this chord type—Bm7♭5 and Em7♭5, both played with the same grip. Palm mute the down-stemmed notes and pick them with your thumb; grab the chords on beats 2 and 4 with your index, middle, and ring fingers, lowest note to highest.

If you compare the album and *AG Sessions* versions of "Turner Station," you'll notice that Bibb approaches the accompaniment with subtle improvised variations. Be sure to do the same once you've learned the music as notated here. AG



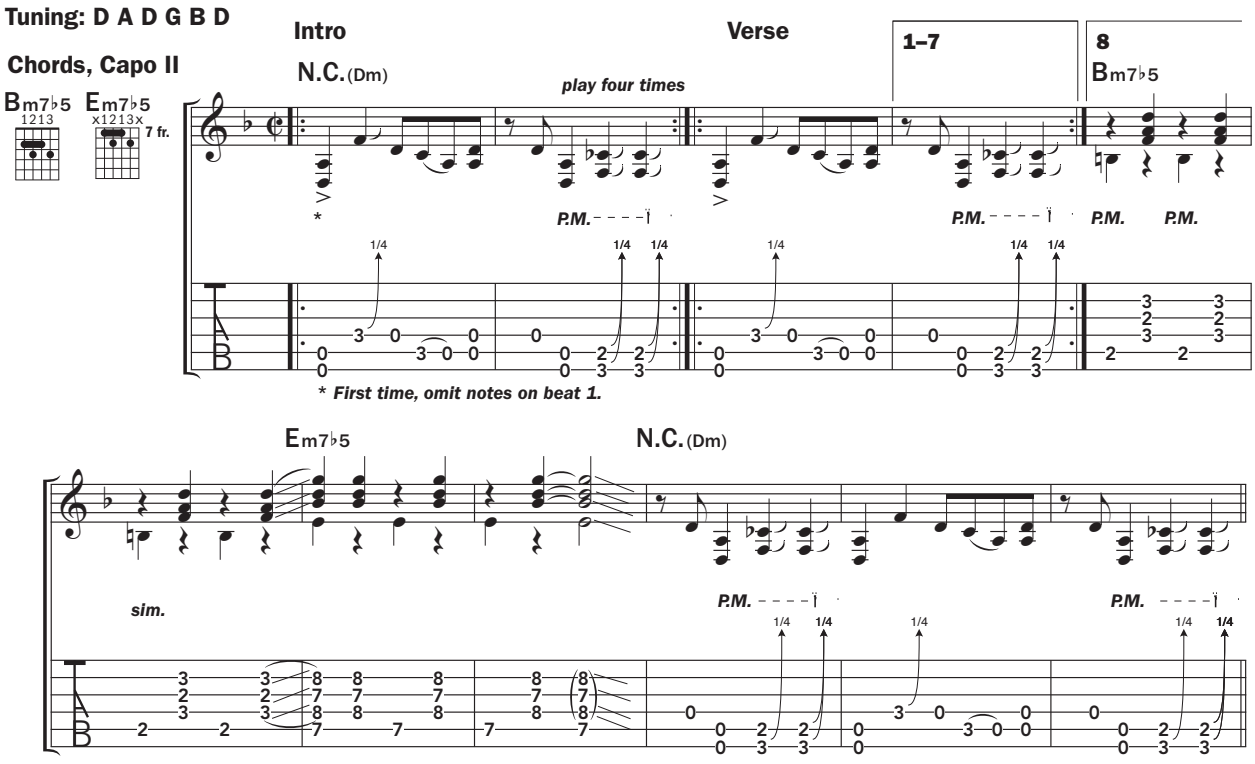
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TURNER STATION

WORDS AND MUSIC BY ERIC BIBB



Intro

N.C. (Dm)

N.C. (Dm)

1. Goin' up to Turner Station

If I have to hobo there

Goin' up to Turner Station

If I have to hobo there

Bm7♭5

Start a new life, brother

Em7♭5 **N.C. (Dm)**

Believe I'll cut my hair

2. Everything don' changed
My walk, talk, state of mind
Everything don' changed
My walk, talk, state of mind
Since I made my decision
Leave this town behind

3. Get a job at the steel mill
Make that double shift, overtime
Get a job at the steel mill
Make that double shift, overtime
Pickin' that man's tobacco
Never made me one lousy dime

Interlude (use verse progression)

4. Got a place up in Turner Station
Make a preacher lay his body down
Got a place up in Turner Station
Make that preacher lay his body down
Make a man forget the system
Keepin' his face in a permanent frown

Interlude (use verse progression)

5. Goin' up to Turner Station
If I have to hobo there
I do declare
Goin' up to Turner Station
If I have to hobo there
Start a new life, brother
Believe I'll cut my hair

Outro

N.C. (Dm)

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Kitbag
Demystifying phantom power

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New Gear
Collings debuts the T-Series OM

68
New Gear
Taylor introduces upgraded 814ce

72
New Gear
The sweet sound of Luna's Art Recorder



Case study: Adam Jacobson and Ryan Sauter

COURTESY OF ACOUSTIC REMEDY

Making a Stand

Ryan Sauter and Adam Jacobson of Acoustic Remedy design the ultimate instrument-display case

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

About ten years ago, Ryan Sauter, then an environmental consultant and avocational guitarist living in La Crosse, Wisconsin, sat strumming a guitar in his living room, instrument cases strewn about the space. His wife, not a fan of this decor, popped in to request a tidier solution for instrument storage. So Sauter went out and bought a couple of cheap metal stands and set his guitars up neatly in the room.

Sauter enjoyed having his instruments within easy reach. But during a punishing Midwestern winter with the heater running at full blast, he grew dismayed as the action on the guitars shifted and their frets developed sharp ends. To remedy this problem, he envisioned a humidity-controlled replacement for the common guitar stand. "I thought for sure that such a product existed," he says. "But when I went to look for one on the internet, I couldn't find anything like it."

To fill that void in the market, Sauter started a new company. Along with a musician buddy, Adam Jacobson, he now presides over Acoustic Remedy, whose main product, the ClimaStand, is a protective display case that keeps an instrument at an optimal relative humidity level. But while Sauter and Jacobson designed the ClimaStand with functionality foremost in mind, they haven't given short shrift to aesthetic considerations. "The guitars that musicians store in our cases are treasured instruments that some would consider works of art, so we want the guitars to be the stars and the cases to be the frames," Sauter says.

REALIZING A PROTOTYPE

When Sauter first put a pencil to paper to sketch out the ClimaStand, he was green to say the least, not having had any experience in woodworking or manufacturing. So he reached out to Jacobson, whom he'd befriended in the early 2000s when the two were undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Jacobson's father, Denny Jacobson, is a master carpenter and cabinet builder, and he seemed like a great resource for building a few test models. Instead, the elder Jacobson offered his son and Sauter an informal apprenticeship. "We spent six months learning the tricks of the trade, building prototypes, testing gaskets, latches, and figuring out a way to control the relative humidity in the case," Sauter says.

Armed with their new woodworking skills, Sauter and Jacobson eventually arrived at an elegant design. Feeling confident about the ClimaStand, they showcased it at a local bluegrass festival, Larryfest, in 2008, and waited for orders to pour in. But that didn't happen. Toiling in their respective garages to keep up with even sporadic orders, they found themselves at a crossroads. "It was emotionally tough to spend night after night in our shops, struggling to build cases." Sauter says, "We needed to figure out a different way to run the business—or throw in the towel."

THE AMISH CONNECTION

To help solve their conundrum, Sauter and Jacobson reached out to Paul Thieman, the

Cont. on p. 62

STAND
ABOVE THE REST



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owner of String Swing, best known for its wall-mounted instrument hangers. Thieman suggested they outsource the building of the ClimaStand and introduced them to a local woodworker who could produce their design with superior efficiency and craftsmanship. An Amish craftsman and his assistant now build around ten ClimaStands per month, one at a time and without electrical tools—just a table saw powered by an internal combustion engine. (The Amish avoid using power from the public electrical grid.)

"Even though we spent hundreds of hours creating and securing a patent for our product, Acoustic Remedy didn't actually start feeling like a business until we hired the Amish to build the cases," Jacobson says.

Acoustic Remedy's most popular offering is the Floor Model ClimaStand. This trapezoidal case mimics the taper of a guitar—widest at the lower bout and narrowest at the headstock. Inside the ClimaStand, a String Swing cradle holds the instrument securely. The case sits on a wooden base with a rear compartment for storing accessories, and it's also available in a wall-mounted version. "Since its inception, the case has remained relatively unchanged," Jacobson explains. "Our floor and wall models utilize identical designs, with the only difference being the base unit."

Prices range from $875 and up.

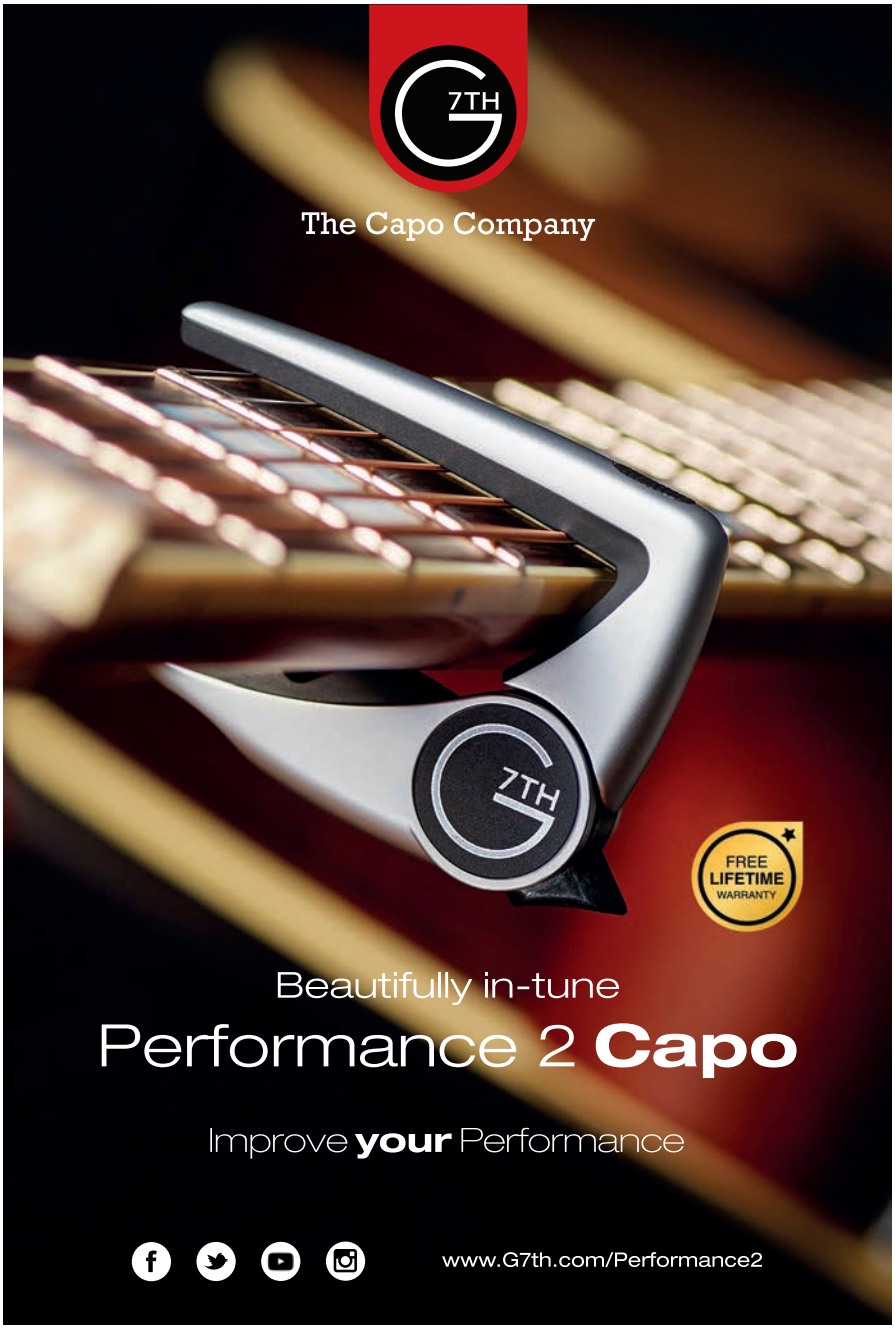
Unlike a conventional stand, the ClimaStand has a sturdy glass door. This protects the instrument while creating a sealed environment (through Acoustic Remedy's patented gasket-and-latch system) for efficient humidity control. Used with D'Addario's Two-Way Humidification system, the ClimaStand's interior chamber stays at a constant relative humidity level of 45–50 percent. "We've performed a dry-ice test as well as a light test to ensure that there are no air leaks," Jacobson says.

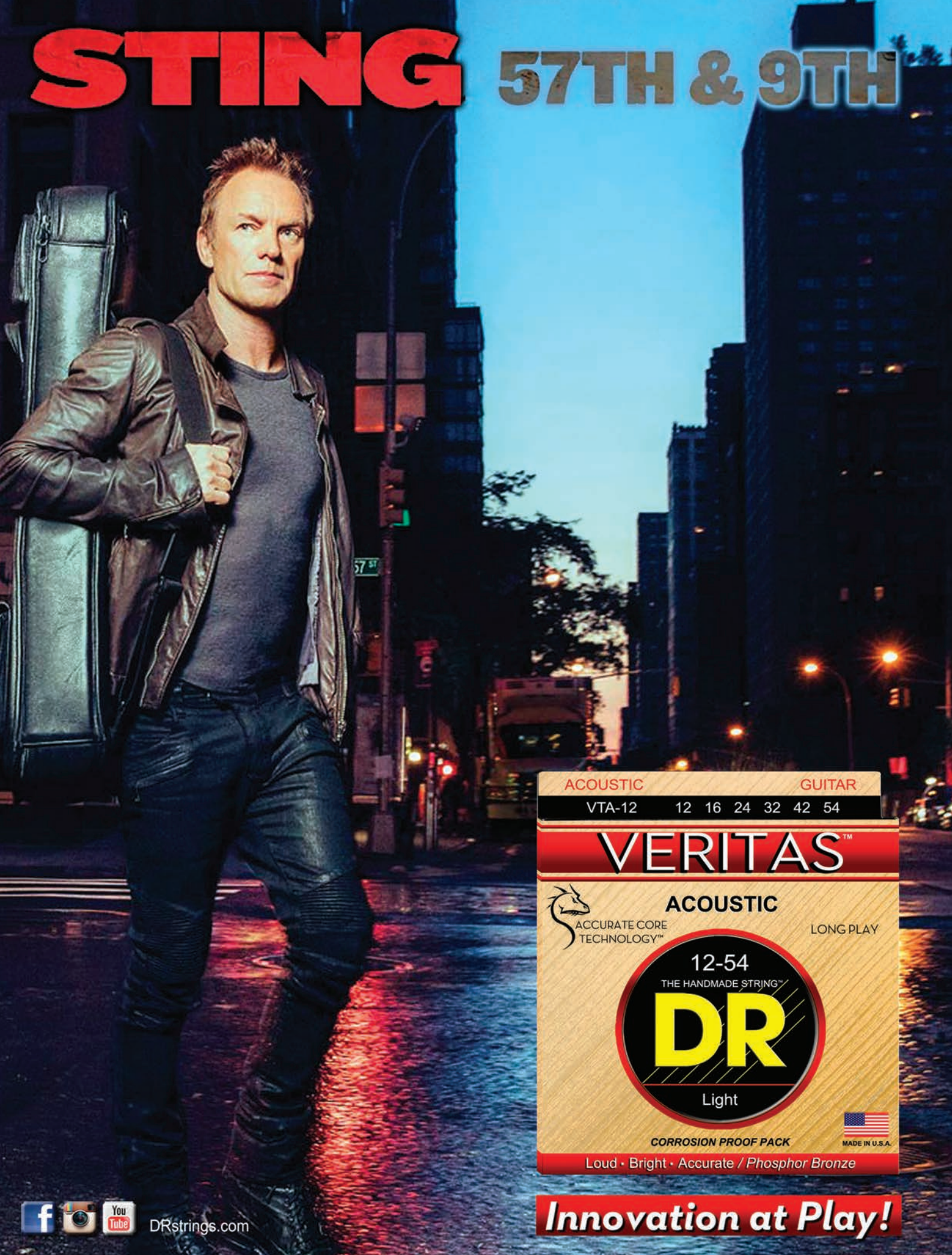
HIGHLY ADAPTABLE DESIGN

In designing the ClimaStand, Sauter and Jacobson wanted to create a beautiful object that complements not just the instrument but the home or studio that it's displayed in. That's why they chose a simple, hardwood design, with a range of satin-finished wood options allowing for great aesthetic adaptability. "Our cases can be found in ultra-modern lofts, cozy mountain lodges, and everything in between," Sauter says. "The straight lines and soft edges allow the case to take on a modern look when it's built from figured maple or wenge. But it takes on a whole different personality—more of a rustic thing—when constructed with reclaimed barn wood, quarter-sawn oak, or aromatic cedar."

Sauter and Jacobson are thoughtful when it comes to the woods used in the ClimaStand, working with species that are sustainably harvested and never in violation of the international treaties. Acoustic Remedy does fulfill customer requests for nondomestic options like cocobolo, padauk, and wenge, and the Amish craftsmen find most of the woods locally. "Several of the native species, such as cherry, walnut, maple, cedar, and oak are sourced directly in Wisconsin, often within 50 miles of the shop," Jacobson says. "Our reclaimed woods are typically from barns that are torn down nearby."

Though Acoustic Remedy maintains a stock of around 50 or 60 ClimaStands, Sauter and Jacobson ultimately see their company as a custom shop. They accommodate not just wood and even inlay preferences, but nonstandard sizes and shape as well. They've made ClimaStands for everything from a concert ukulele to a cello, and, in their most unusual commission to date, built a wall-mounted case that houses a trio of bluegrass instruments: a guitar, a mandolin, and a banjo. "Sketch us something on the back of a napkin," Sauter says, "and we'll make it happen." AG




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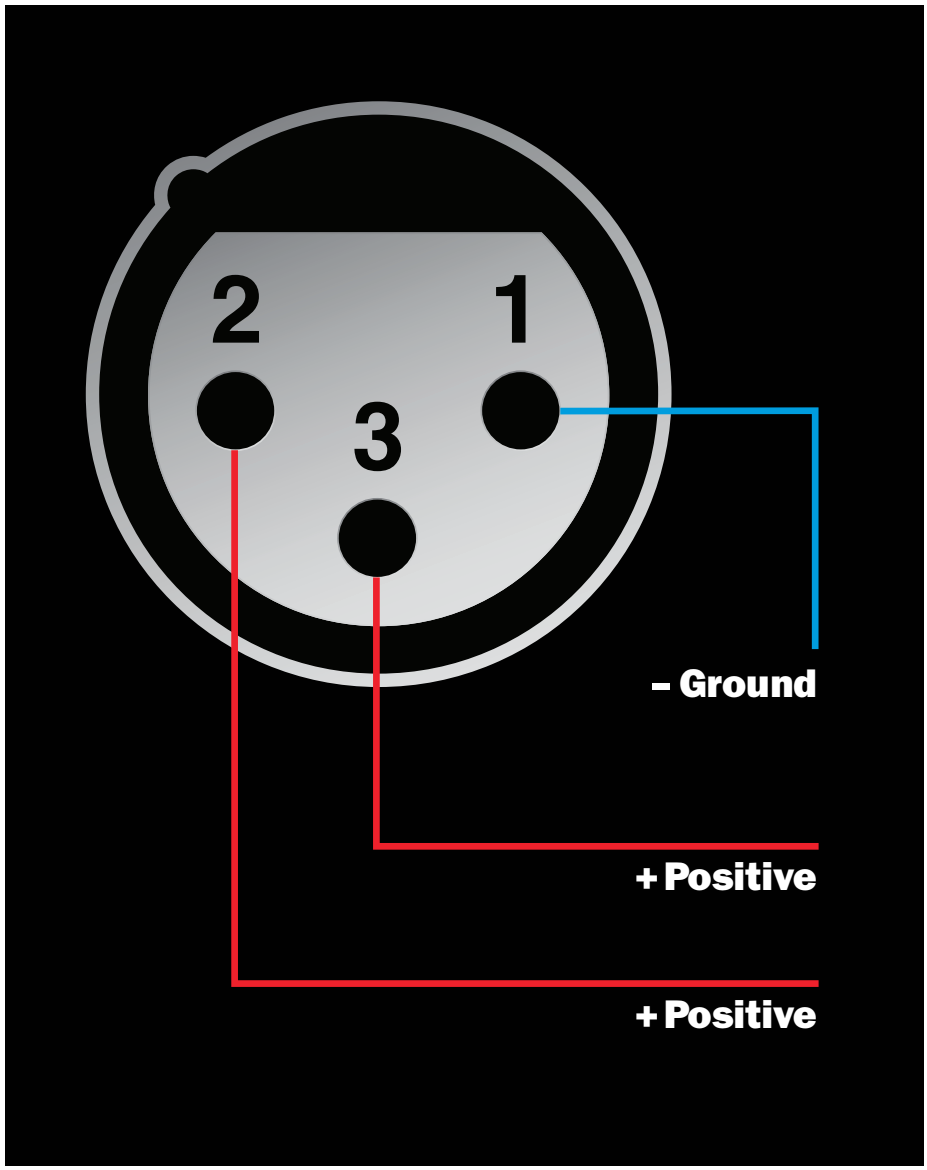
The Phantom Knows

Microphone phantom-power basics demystified

BY DOUG YOUNG

If you've used microphones for live performances or in the studio, you've almost certainly encountered phantom power—that slightly mysterious-sounding button found on many mixers and preamps. Phantom power provides a source of electricity to some microphones, usually condenser microphones. Most of the time, the phantom-power feature just does its job silently, but a bit of knowledge can help when things go wrong or when choosing the gear with which you work. As a guitarist, you may also encounter some less common scenarios related to phantom power.

These pointers should help demystify phantom power.



NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T

Phantom power is a way to provide power to microphones—that need electricity to operate, but that don't have a dedicated AC power source. On the other hand, dynamic mics—the ubiquitous Shure SM57 and SM58 mics, for example—do not require power. Phantom power involves a clever scheme that leverages the multiple wires in a typical balanced-XLR cable to provide voltage to mics that need it without affecting those that do not. You can plug either type of mic into a mixer that provides phantom power, and the condenser mic will detect and use the power, while the dynamic mic will ignore it. This trick is why the scheme is referred to as *phantom*—it's there for mics that need it, but invisible to others!

One complication with phantom power is that there are multiple standards for voltage levels. Most modern mixers provide 48 volts, which has become so common that many people assume that phantom power automatically means 48 volts. However, the ANSI standard (IEC 61938) that covers such things allows for 12, 24, and 48 volts. As a result, you may encounter gear that supports any of these voltages. Several popular acoustic guitar amps provide 24 volts. One popular acoustic preamp even provides just 15 volts.

In most cases, these different levels should not cause concern. Most mics work fine over the voltage range of 12-48 volts, although many mic manufacturers specify 48 volts for best performance, and some mics may be more problematic than others when encountering lower levels of phantom power—you may notice some loss of output or sensitivity with lower voltages. In any case, a lower voltage won't damage the mic, so you can always see for yourself if a lower voltage will work.

Some DIs or preamps can be powered by phantom power (the popular L.R. Baggs ParaDI, for example), and these may not work with lower voltages. The amount of current provided by the phantom power source is another factor. Most mics require only a few milliamps of current, which any modern mixer should easily support, but some mics—as well as phantom powered preamps—may have higher current demands. Some studio microphones, most notably tube mics, require so much power that they use their own dedicated power supply instead of relying on phantom power.

Although it is safe to plug a dynamic mic into an input that provides phantom power, plugging in other electronic devices—a keyboard or an effects pedal that has an XLR out, for example—is less certain. Check your instruction manual to be sure that the device is safe for phantom power, and assume that it is not safe if the manual is silent about the issue. For multiple reasons, it's a good practice to use a DI between such devices and a

mixer, including isolating them from phantom power. You may have also heard warnings that phantom power can damage some mics. Ribbon mics (usually used only in studios) can be damaged by phantom power if a cable is mis-wired. It's also best to plug microphones in before turning on phantom power. At the very least, plugging in a mic while phantom power is active can cause a loud, audible pop from the speakers if the volume is up.

OTHER POWERING SCHEMES

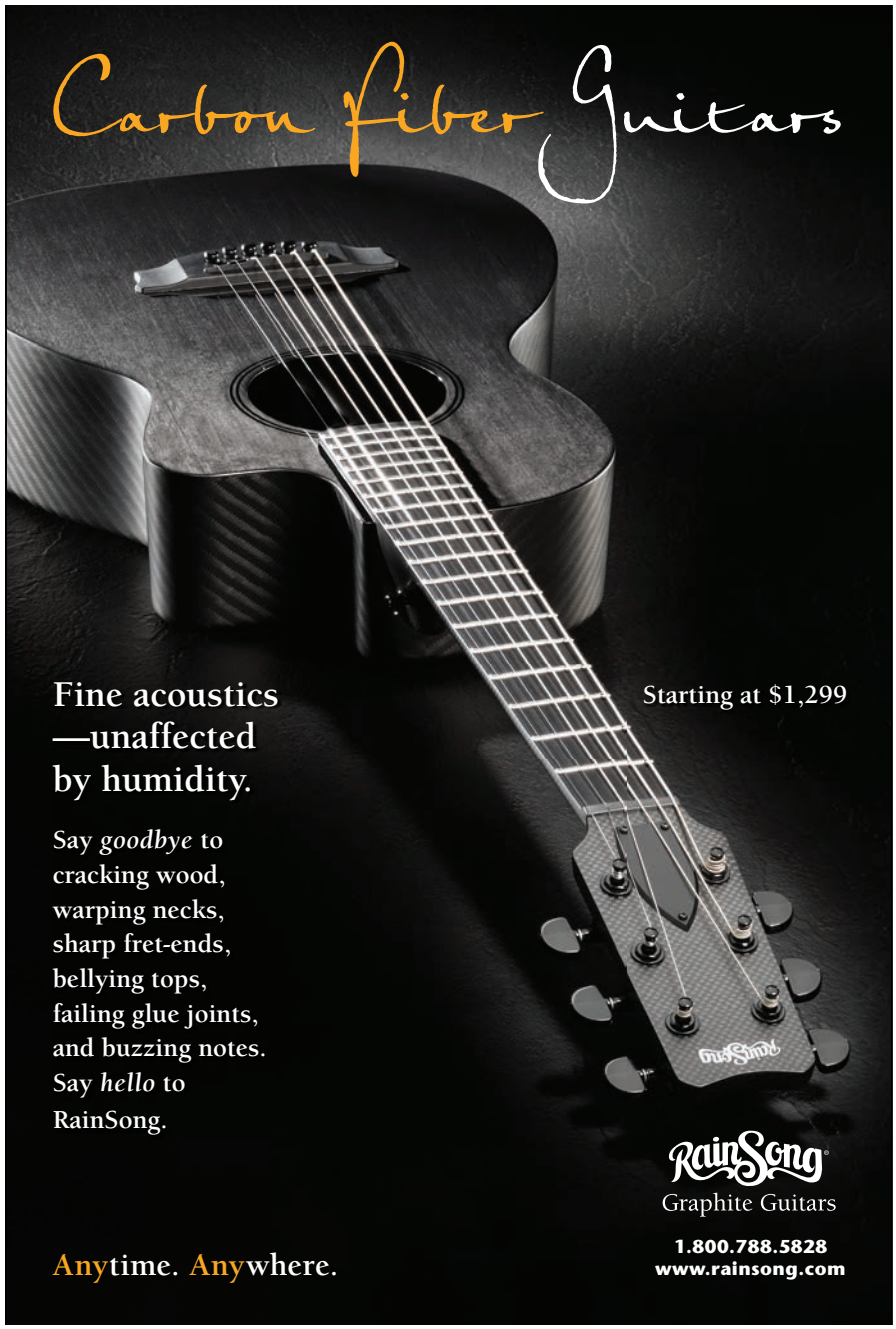
A frequent source of confusion for guitarists is that some microphones use different powering schemes. One such approach is known as bias power—also called plug-in-power. Bias power is frequently required by internal guitar mics, as well as mics used with some portable recorders, wireless systems, and more. Bias power uses a two-wire system, unlike the XLR 3-wire system supported by most mixers. A voltage, usually around 5-9 volts, is applied directly to the mic's "hot" wire. This voltage is not "phantom," and you cannot use bias-powered mics directly with a phantom power supply, or vice versa.

Phantom power is a complex subject, but for most of us, it's a matter of matching the requirements of our mics—or other gear—with the features of the mixer.

Acoustic guitarists often encounter bias-powered mics as part of dual-source pickup systems. In commercial dual-source systems with onboard electronics, such as the L.R. Baggs Anthem or DTar Multi-Source, the mic is powered by the onboard electronics and battery, so you don't even have to be aware of it. But many guitarists like to build their own systems by adding a mic, such as K&K Sound's Silver Bullet mic, to an existing pickup. In these cases, the mic can be powered by wiring it to the ring terminal of a stereo jack in the guitar, and then using a stereo guitar cable to plug into an acoustic guitar preamp that provides the bias power on the ring of the cable. The Grace Felix and Headway EDB-2 preamps are examples of guitar preamps that support this feature. Rolling your own dual source pickup system can be daunting, and requires planning out your entire system. A good guitar tech can clear up any confusion and help you set up such a system correctly.

Unfortunately, many preamp and guitar-amp manufacturers incorrectly label bias power as "phantom" power—they are not the same thing! However, the difference is usually obvious from the connectors: If you have an amp or preamp that provides power for a mic, an XLR-mic connector almost certainly indicates real phantom power. A system that provides power through a stereo ¼-inch guitar jack generally indicates bias power. The mics are similar—a mic with an XLR connector expects phantom power, a mic with two wires, or a simple non-XLR connector, probably expects bias power.

Phantom power is a complex subject, but for most of us, it's a matter of matching the requirements of our mics—or other gear—with the features of the mixer. When in doubt, consult your instruction manual or get in touch with the manufacturer. AG



Old Soul

Bill Collings revisits his roots in the new T series of guitars

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

The new Collings is a sight to behold with its streamlined silhouette, gracefully arched top, and vintage-looking hardware.

But that's just the hardshell case—one of Collings' latest offerings, made in house to Bill Collings' exact specifications.

The guitar inside the case—the OM1A T—is a force to be reckoned with. It's beautifully crafted and, though newly built, has a mature sound and a phenomenal responsiveness. It's highly inspiring to play, and it rewards well-articulated ideas with a brilliant, singing tone. On the other hand, it amplifies your technical deficiencies. Whether you're playing at your best or at your worst, it's not easy to put down this excellent guitar.

TRADITION, TRADITION!

In a sense all Collings guitars are traditional, in that their primary sources of inspiration are vintage Gibson and Martin designs. But unlike other models in the Collings lineup, those in the new Traditional or T series—which includes OMs and dreadnoughts—are built using certain techniques and specs that contribute to the greatness of the best prewar instruments.



Like its T-series counterparts, the OM1A T has prewar-style scalloped X bracing with no tongue brace—the horizontal strip that reinforces the area where the fingerboard extension meets the soundboard. The removal of this brace lends openness to the sound, at least theoretically. The guitars are assembled with animal-protein glue, which is thought to better transfer sound than modern adhesives. And an ultra-light nitrocellulose lacquer finish, thinner than on Collings' standard instruments, allows the woods to vibrate optimally.



Some builders stick strictly to prewar designs, but Collings brings some contemporary techniques to the mix in the Traditional series. The OM1A T's neck joint is the company's standard hybrid mortise and tenon/bolt assembly. This allows for much easier neck-angle adjustments than does the time-honored glued-in dovetail joint. And the frets have been precisely leveled via a PLEK machine.

About that case: It's a new Traditional series case that pairs 1930s-inspired design with modern durability. Made from a three-ply poplar frame laminated at the Collings shop, it's much sleeker and lighter than most. Its crushed velvet lining looks vintage-correct but conceals an injection-molded neck rest and fretboard cushion. The nickel-plated latches and hinges also look old-school but feel robust.

IMPECCABLE ALL AROUND

When I first remove the OM1A T from the case, I take a moment to admire its unimpeachably good build and handsome aesthetics. The guitar is lightweight and refined, absolutely flawless from stem to stern. Its gloss finish is rubbed to perfection and feels incredibly smooth. The design is spartan but teeming with beautiful details, like a delicate wooden rosette and purfling, not to mention faux tortoise binding, bridge pins, and endpin. And the guitar smells wonderful, redolent of red spruce.

The OM1A T plays beautifully well. Its medium-sized neck with a subtle V profile splits the difference between dozens of prewar guitars that Collings scrutinized in the shop; the nut is 1 ¾ inches wide. The ebony fingerboard's edges are rolled, giving them a soft and broken-in feel. Combined with low action on medium-sized frets, the neck feels accommodating of any technique or playing style.

Overall, the OM1A T has an authoritative voice with plentiful projection and sustain, owing in part to its Adirondack spruce soundboard. (The base model of the guitar includes Sitka spruce.) I first play some single-note runs on the instrument and am as impressed by the thickness of the trebles as the firmness of the bass notes. All of the notes leave delicate trails behind them, not unlike the optical effects of a fireworks display.

I use the OM1A T in preparing the notation



for this issue of *AG*. It's a very comfortable guitar to sit at a desk with, given its lightness. And it sounds stunning in a range of styles. On "Lion's Share," playing through both Julian Lage's lines and Chris Eldridge's chord work reveals that the guitar has an impressive gravity and depth of sound. (See p. 56)

The guitar barks heartily when I work through Eric Bibb's "Turner Station" (See p. 58) and it sounds beautifully resonant when I play it fingerstyle and with a capo, as in Gabriel Kahane's "LA." (See p. 52) In an entirely different direction, I tune to open C to work through Adam Levy's lesson feature on Robbie Basho (See p. 26). The OM1A T is magnificent in this lowered tuning, with an almost symphonic range of timbral colors available through shifts of picking-hand placement and velocity.

Like all the Collings guitars I've known, the OM1A T is a splendid instrument in all aspects. A guitar of this caliber doesn't come cheap, but it does go for a fraction of the price of a comparable prewar OM in good condition. And it's one of the finest mahogany production models available at any price point: perhaps the platonic ideal of a modern OM. AG



AT A GLANCE:

COLLINGS OM1A T

BODY 14-fret OM size; Adirondack spruce top with prewar scalloped X brace (no tongue brace); Honduran mahogany back and sides; ebony bridge; high-gloss nitrocellulose lacquer finish

NECK Honduran mahogany neck; ebony fretboard; 25 1/2-inch scale length; 1 3/4-inch nut; nickel Waverly tuners; high-gloss nitrocellulose lacquer finish

EXTRAS D'Addario EJ16 strings (.012–.053); Collings Traditional handcrafted case

PRICE $6,150 list/$5,535 MAP
Made in the USA
collingsguitars.com







Box Deluxe

Taylor introduces an upgraded version of its popular 814ce

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

When I pick a few bass notes on the new Taylor 814ce DLX, first with my thumb and then a plectrum, I'm struck by its richness and depth of sound. Traveling across all six strings and up the neck, both picking gently and really digging in, I'm impressed by the guitar's evenness and clarity in all registers, as well as its warm natural reverb. It's immediately obvious that Taylor—which for decades has been raising the bar on the modern steel-string guitar—has taken its flagship model to the next level.

LUXURIOUS STYLING

When the brilliant young instrument maker and musician Andy Powers took over as master luthier at Taylor Guitars several years ago, one of the first things he did was overhaul the 814ce and its 800-series counterparts. He tweaked its bracing patterns, wood and finish thicknesses, and cosmetic appointments; he began using animal proteins in gluing the sound-transferring parts of the guitar. The instrument also received a new electronics package, the Expression System 2. It was arguably one of Taylor's finest guitars to date.

The 814ce DLX is even better.

The DLX, or Deluxe, designation refers to a trio of new upgrades: Adirondack spruce bracing, said to turbo-charge the sound; a rounded rosewood armrest, which not only feels, but looks great; and ultra high-performance Gotoh 510 tuners with their 21:1 gear ratio. It can be made even more deluxe with options like an Adirondack spruce soundboard ($600), Milagro Brazilian rosewood back and sides ($7,700), and gold Gotoh 510s with black buttons ($220).

As is expected from a high-end Taylor guitar, our 814ce feels luxurious and well- built. An especially nice set of Indian rosewood—deeply colored and straight-grained—was used for the back and sides, and the finely grained Sitka spruce used for the soundboard is similarly premium. On the guitar's body, the 3.5-mil-thick (that's three and a half *thousandths* of an inch) finish is perfectly smooth and glossy. The classy wooden appointments—the maple binding and rosewood edge trim and pickguard—are all perfectly flush and tidy.



It's immediately obvious that Taylor—which for decades has been raising the bar on the modern steel-string guitar—has taken its flagship model to the next level.

A GUITAR FOR ALL STYLES

Thanks to a top-notch fretwork and a perfect factory setup, along with Taylor's streamlined C-shaped neck, the 814ce plays extremely well—as easily and quickly as a good electric guitar. The neck's satin finish feels sleek and comfortable as well.

Due to the guitar's lushness and clarity, I find myself playing arrangements of tunes by the great jazz pianist Bill Evans, packed as they are with cluster-voiced chords. The guitar really shines in this setting—it feels like a lap piano.

But the best thing about the 814ce is its versatility. It's based on Taylor's Grand Auditorium body: a medium-sized box engineered with tonal balance in mind. And it responds well to any situation. The guitar is a superb choice for rhythmic accompaniment. Chords of all qualities, open and fretted, have excellent note separation and a satisfying low end with just the right amount of presence for playing in a jam or with a singer.

It's also a very agreeable guitar when it comes to single-note work. Bluegrass and jazz lines have sharp definition and really benefit from the instrument's terrific balance between different strings and registers.

I notice how smoothly and precisely the Gotoh tuners work when I audition the guitar in D A D G A D, open G, and open C. The 814ce DLX maintains its resplendent voice in these nonstandard turnings while proving itself to be ideal for fingerpicking cascades of arpeggios: rich and sonorous, but far from muddy.

As on other Taylors I've had the pleasure to spend time with recently, the ES2 (Expression System 2) electronics, paired with a Fender Acoustasonic amp, do a beautiful job of conveying the guitar's natural acoustic sound. The ES2 would make a great tool for recording, too, alone or in conjunction with an external microphone.

If you're a modern steel-string guitarist in search of the ultimate all-in-one instrument, Taylor's 814ce DLX is well worth an audition. AG

AT A GLANCE

TAYLOR 814CE DLX

BODY
Grand Auditorium with Venetian cutaway; Sitka spruce top; Indian rosewood back and sides; gloss finish

NECK
Mahogany neck; ebony fretboard; 25 1/2-inch scale length; 1 3/4-inch nut; Gotoh 510 tuners; satin finish

EXTRAS
Elixir Phosphor Bronze HD Light strings (.012–.053); Expression System 2 electronics; deluxe hardshell case

PRICE
$5,098 list/$3,999 street
Made in the USA
taylorguitars.com





The Bottom Line

The Spector Timbre bass is an accessible, affordable option for guitarists looking to beef up their sonic toolkit

BY GREG OLWELL

It doesn't matter if it's a guitar, a ukulele, a violin, or the new Spector Timbre acoustic bass guitar; when you get down to it, an acoustic stringed instrument is a wooden box set up to amplify the vibrations of a string. The best are efficient machines that make the most out of your playing technique—when one is working right, it feels like magic. The Spector Timbre Bass feels like magic, but after playing it for a few weeks, I have a good feeling that the results come more from Spector's decades of building experience than sleight of hand or ancient potions.

Many luthiers theorize about the importance of a good connection between an instrument's neck and its body. The idea is that a good connection between the two parts transfers more energy from the vibrating string into the instrument's body, exciting the body's natural amplifying ability. If there's any credence to this theory, the Timbre Bass embodies it.

For starters, like a few of the other acoustically successful acoustic-bass guitars (ABG), such as the Guild B-50 and Tacoma Thunderchief, the Timbre has a large body. Though bulkier than the ABGs based on guitar bodies, the Spector's large body gives it enough projection and big bassy tone to be heard and felt when played without electricity. The offset soundhole (another nod toward the Tacoma) gives the top more surface area to resonate.

Visible through the ovoid soundhole on the upper-bass bout, the bolt-on neck attaches to one of the most massive neck blocks I've ever seen. Instead of making the instrument heavy or unbalanced, the Spector feels lively. Every note I play is vivacious and playful, with an immediate responsiveness to subtle changes in plucking-hand position or fretting-hand touch.

When I finally plug the jumbo, ladder-braced Spector into a proper bass amp (an SWR Baby Blue combo) and turn up, I'm amazed.

I don't use that word lightly. The sound pouring out of my amp is my acoustic ideal: punchy, warm, clear, and well-balanced across the frequency spectrum, with a tight, solid low-end. But where it really excels is what it doesn't do, the electrified tone is completely free of the harsh, plasticky *clack* heard in so many instruments with undersaddle pickups—and really out-of-place on a bass.

The tone improves the more I strip away all EQ and run the Spector flat onboard and by bypassing the SWR's EQ section. In short, the Timbre has no harsh high-end that needs to be dialed-back, just plump bass-y goodness that will please your bandmates as much as it will please you.

At under $699, the Spector Timbre is not only affordable and accessible to many guitarists looking to add a bass to their toolkit, it's simply one of the finest-sounding acoustic bass guitars on the market. AG



AT A GLANCE

SPECTOR TIMBRE ACOUSTIC BASS

BODY Solid Sitka spruce top; laminated mahogany back and sides; rosewood bridge; matte finish (available in natural, black, and walnut stain)

NECK 3-piece mahogany bolt-on; 20-fret rosewood fingerboard with dot markers; 34-inch scale; 1½-inch nut; black Gotoh-style tuners

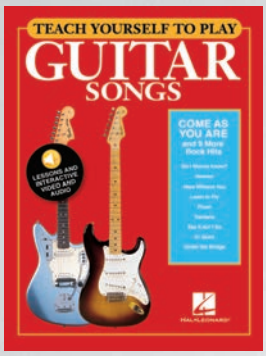
ELECTRONICS Fishman Sonicore pickup; Fishman Presys+ preamp

EXTRAS Padded gig bag

PRICE $929 list/$699 street
Made in China
spectorbass.com

TEACH YOURSELF TO PLAY GUITAR SONGS

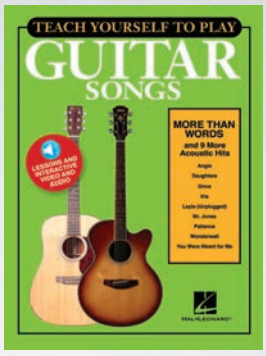
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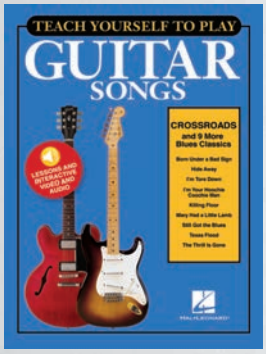
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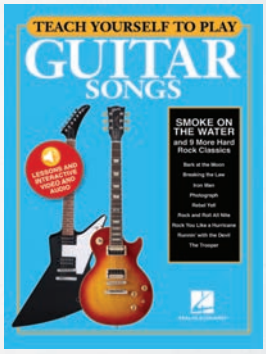
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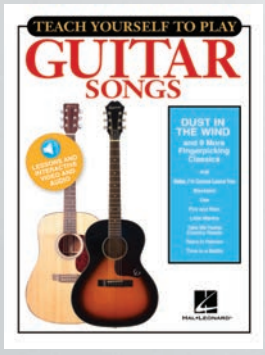
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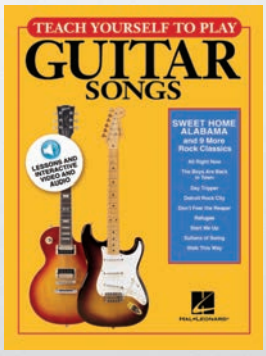
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"DUST IN THE WIND" & 9 MORE FINGERPICKING CLASSICS

Anji (Simon & Garfunkel) • Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You (Led Zeppelin) • Blackbird (The Beatles) • Dee (Randy Rhoads) • Dust in the Wind (Kansas) • Fire and Rain (James Taylor) • Little Martha (The Allman Brothers Band) • Take Me Home, Country Roads (John Denver) • Tears in Heaven (Eric Clapton) • Time in a Bottle (Jim Croce).

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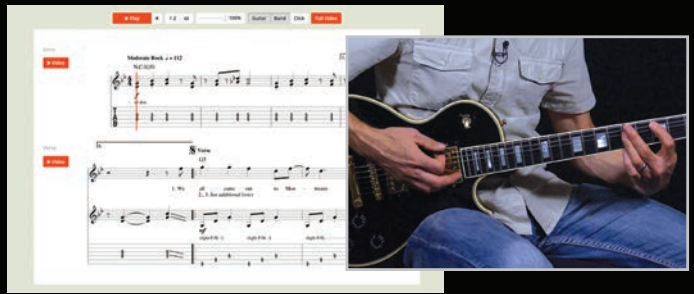


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Over the Moon

Luna's new concert-size Art Recorder offers smooth playability and a winning sound

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Luna Guitars has long been known as much for affordability as for the floral motifs on many of its soundboards. So, when I unzip Luna's new Art Recorder steel-string from its gig bag, I'm surprised to find that the top is plain spruce, and that the guitar has only the barest ornamental work. And while I learn that the instrument's street price—around $400—is similarly minimal—the guitar is made entirely from solid tonewoods, unlike many instruments at this price point. I'm already impressed, and I haven't even played it.

A FINE VOICE

Right out of the box, it's apparent that the Art Recorder is a very nice-sounding guitar. Its intonation is spot-on, and there are no dead spots on the neck, nor any unwanted buzzing sounds. Overall, it's warm and mellow, owing likely to the mahogany back and sides, and the balance between registers is good. The trebles are clear and strong and the mids punchy; the bass is certainly adequate, though it could be just a bit more assertive.

As befits an instrument that's designed for use in the studio, the guitar responds well to a range of techniques and repertoire. When I strum basic cowboy chords and complex jazz voicings alike, it has a nice, uncluttered sound that will sit well in a mix. It's satisfying to play single-note blues and jazz lines on the instrument, which has an impressive resonance and natural reverb.

The Art Recorder sounds good in nonstandard tunings like DADGAD and open G, and the Gotoh-style machines make it easy to move between tunings. While the nut is relatively narrow at 1 $^{11}/_{16}$ inches, the guitar feels great to fingerpick. It's plenty responsive to pick-hand finger placement and velocity, and the notes of arpeggiated chords ring together beautifully, without any cloudiness.

The guitar's fine sound is matched by its outstanding playability. A slender C-shaped neck and low action make it easy on the fret hand, and the neck's relative narrowness helps when it comes to chord shapes involving fretting with the thumb. Players with small hands should love the neck profile, but many with larger mitts will find it agreeable as well. Plus, the neck's satin finish cuts down on fret-hand drag when shifting positions.

SMARTLY DESIGNED AND BUILT

In place of Luna's trademark flourishes, the Art Recorder mostly sports subtle, traditional appointments like herringbone-patterned rosette and purfling work, black body binding ,and a rosewood headstock veneer. On the fretboard, moon-phase inlays offer a signature detail, as does the headstock's unusually shaped crown.

The guitar's build quality is quite high, especially considering the price. Its fretwork is perfect, smoothly polished and free from jaggedness. There are no defects in the finish, even in the tricky-to-work spots, like the neck-to-body junction. And inside the guitar, things are also spick and span. It's almost boring how clean the guitar is.

You won't find electronics on the Art Recorder, but anyone looking for a good option for recording with a microphone should definitely check out this smart and affordable player. It might also be the perfect guitar for a beginning or intermediate player—an instrument free from bells and whistles, whose smooth playability and winning sound will make learning enjoyable. AG



AT A GLANCE:

LUNA ART RECORDER

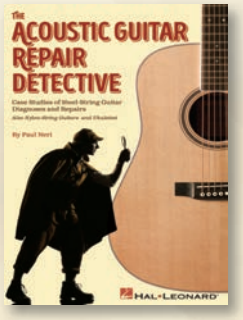
BODY Non-cutaway concert size; solid spruce top; solid mahogany back and sides; natural satin finish

NECK Mahogany neck; rosewood fretboard; 25.5-inch scale length; 1 $^{11}/_{16}$-inch nut; sealed die-cast tuners; natural satin finish

EXTRAS D'Addario EXP 16 strings (.012-.053). Optional padded gig bag

PRICE $598.50 list/$399 street
Made in China
lunaguitars.com

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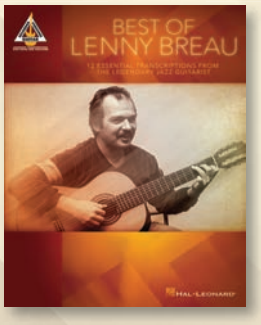


THE ACOUSTIC GUITAR REPAIR DETECTIVE

by Paul Neri

Learn to diagnose common problems relating to the adjustment, upkeep and repair of your acoustic guitar, as well as nylon-string guitars and ukuleles. Topics include: humidity • cracks • braces • bridge plates • frets • guitar action • intonation • neck angle • tuning machines • buying a used guitar • cleaning & polishing • pickups • and much more.

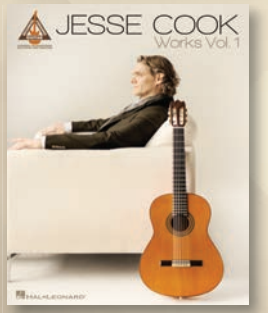
00172427 6" x 9" $14.99



BEST OF LENNY BREAU

This folio features 12 note-for-note transcriptions of Breau's impressive and intricate guitar playing over the course of his career. Titles include: Bluesette • Cannon Ball Rag • The Claw • Days of Wine and Roses • Freight Train • Georgia on My Mind • It Could Happen to You • Oscar's Blues • Spanjazz • Taranta • There Is No Greater Love • Visions.

00141446 Guitar Recorded Versions $19.99



JESSE COOK – WORKS VOL. 1

This collection of 12 songs from award-winning, virtuoso guitarist Jesse Cook features highlights from his career transcribed note for note with tab. Titles include: Alone • Bogota by Bus • Cafe Mocha • Cascada • Dance of Spring • Fields of Blue • Luna Llena • Mario Takes a Walk • Rain • Switchback • Tempest • Virtue.

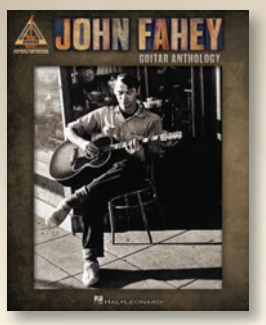
00141704 Guitar Recorded Versions..... $19.99



TOMMY EMMANUEL – LITTLE BY LITTLE

Twenty-two note-for-note transcriptions from the Australian finger-picker virtuoso's double-studio album. Songs include: Countrywide • The Finger Lakes • Haba Na Haba • Half Way Home • Jack Magic • Locomotivation • Moon River • Ruby's Eyes • Smokey Mountain Lullaby • Tapestry • Waiting for a Plane • and more.

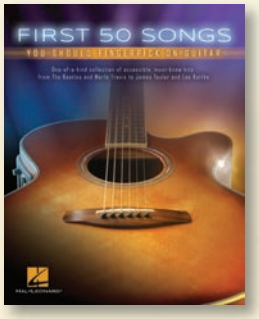
00139220 Guitar Recorded Versions$24.99



JOHN FAHEY – GUITAR ANTHOLOGY

18 songs in note-for-note transcriptions with tab from the man who was considered the grandfather of instrumental acoustic fingerstyle guitar. Includes: America • Brenda's Blues • Desperate Man Blues • In Christ There Is No East or West • John Henry • Tell Her to Come Back Home • When the Springtime Comes Again • and more.

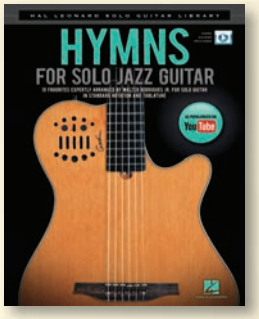
00150257 Guitar Recorded Versions..... $19.99



FIRST 50 SONGS YOU SHOULD FINGERPICK ON GUITAR

Do you feel you've learned enough fingerstyle technique to start playing some real tunes? If so, this is the book for you. 50 must-know songs, including: Blackbird • The Boxer • Fire and Rain • Greensleeves • Hell Hound on My Trail • Julia • Road Trippin' • Tears in Heaven • Time in a Bottle • The Wind • and more.

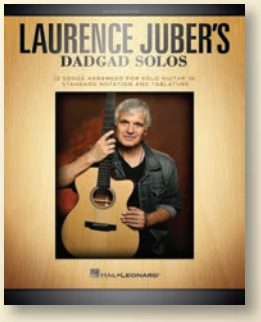
00149269 Solo Guitar $14.99



HYMNS FOR SOLO JAZZ GUITAR

Ten favorite hymns arranged in Walter Rodrigues Jr.'s unique style of solo guitar, in standard notation and tablature. Songs include: Abide with Me • Amazing Grace • Blessed Assurance • Just a Closer Walk with Thee • Oh How I Love Jesus • and more. The book includes access to videos online for download or streaming.

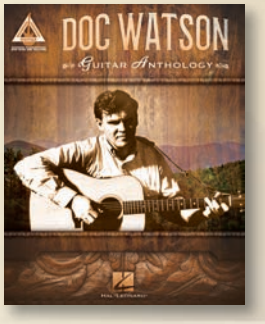
00153842 Book/Online Audio..... $19.99



LAURENCE JUBER'S DADGAD SOLOS

12 songs for solo guitar in DADGAD tuning, arranged by Wings lead guitarist and two-time Grammy-winning fingerstylist Laurence Juber. Extensively fingered in notation and tablature, the songs include: As Time Goes By • Come Rain or Come Shine • Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood • Over the Rainbow • Runaway • (Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay • Yesterday • and more.

00122217 Solo Guitar..... $16.99



DOC WATSON – GUITAR ANTHOLOGY

14 detailed guitar transcriptions are featured in this collection with highlights from his recordings, written note-for-note with tab. Now you can learn the songs, licks and fingerpicking style that made Doc famous. Songs include: Black Mountain Rag • Deep River Blues • Doc's Guitar • Little Sadie • Shady Grove • Tom Dooley • Windy and Warm • and more.

00152161 Guitar Recorded Versions..... $22.99

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'Women of the Country Blues Guitar'

MIXED MEDIA



Various Artists
Roll Columbia: Woody Guthrie's 26 Northwest Songs
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Roll on, Woody Guthrie

A sprawling album chronicles the folk legend's American experience and prolific songwriting skills

BY PAT MORAN

Clocking in at 104 minutes, *Roll Columbia: Woody Guthrie's 26 Northwest Songs* collects new versions of every tune Guthrie wrote in one short month in 1941 for the US government's ambitious Depression-era construction, irrigation, and electrification program in the Columbia River basin in Washington state. It's a bountiful two-disc collection, a plentiful pasture-full of Pacific Northwest-based contributors, including stripped-down folk formalists Pharis and Jason Romero, mandolin virtuoso David Grisman, and REM guitarist Peter Buck.

With 28 tracks, a few songs get repeated. "Jackhammer Blues" is interpreted twice, once as *AG* contributing editor Orville Johnson's slip-sliding country blues—all slurred bent notes and laconic drawl—and again as Martha Scanlon's web of gossamer acoustics, which transmutes Woody's braggadocio into a delicate elegy for the salmon runs destroyed by the Grand Coulee Dam.

"Pastures of Plenty" bookends the collection, opening with the grainy troubadour's lilt and rattling guitars of Michael Hurley and Jon Neufeld, and closing with Johnson's sidewinding Gypsy-jazz shuffle.

In between, Al Neufeld turns the proto-rap "The Talkin' Blues" into a surreal shuffle with reverberating baritone guitar, while Buck and the Young Fresh Fellows' Scott McCaughey give "Grand Coulee Powder Monkey" a ratchety acoustic punk makeover, and turn "Washington Talkin' Blues" into a jangling two-step enlivened by the British invasion chime of Buck's electric guitar.

Roll Columbia celebrates the durable protean pulse of America's folk laureate

Roll Columbia celebrates the durable protean pulse of America's folk laureate, and then stretches Guthrie's songs even further, pulling contemporary rock, rap, and electronica into the rolling current of great American music.



Julian Lage & Chris Eldridge

Mount Royal

(Free Dirt Records)

A modern steel-string duo makes a fresh masterpiece

On paper, Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge might seem like an unlikely duo. Lage travels in jazz and new music circles and has lately been wielding a Fender Telecaster; Eldridge is known for his work in the progressive bluegrass ensemble Punch Brothers. But on *Mount Royal*, the guitarists find plenty of common ground in a warm celebration of the steel-string guitar.

The album includes a handful of original duets stemming from an improv session, rounded out by re-compositions of traditional bluegrass songs and a reading of Eddie Vedder's "Sleeping by Myself." Lage, with his profusion of ideas and his unimpeachable technique, sounds right at home on a traditional number like "Things in Life," while Eldridge, with a similarly brilliant command of the guitar, responds unflappably to Lage's sophisticated harmonic inventions on "Goldacre."

Throughout the album, Lage and Eldridge display a telepathic connection, rare but for the highest-level improvisers. They move fluidly between lead and accompaniment roles, occasionally convening in rhythmic unison to arrive at thrilling harmonies. And it's apparent that both guitarists are wide open to the range of timbral and textural possibilities inherent to their 1939 Martins—Lage's is a 000-18 and Eldridge's a D-28—and take great joy in playing these old guitars.

Engineer Lynne Earls recorded the duo beautifully—every nuance and transient sound is captured in sharp detail—and the album conveys just as well on high-end headphones as it does on an iPhone speaker. It's a highly fulfilling listen from beginning to end, and one that demands many returns. *—Adam Perlmutter*



Richard Osborn

Endless

(Tompkins Square)

Music that's technically rigorous and harmonically complex

To listen to Richard Osborn is to be transported. As a first-generation American Primitive, he's deeply indebted to the music of 1960s Berkeley, California, where he first heard John Fahey and took a few lessons from guitarist Robbie Basho. "He's a student of mine," said Basho, "and he's better technically than me or Fahey." (See a feature on Basho on page 26). But Osborn's influences stretch far beyond that place and time, blending Johann Sebastian Bach, North Indian classical music, and Anglo-Irish trad fingerstyle passages to create a mix that's technically rigorous and harmonically complex.

On *Endless*, his third album since returning to guitar in 1995, Osborn builds on the successes of the self-released *Giving Voice* (2012) and *Freehand* (2015), gaining in confidence and dexterity. In "Laredo Pastoral," he creates a youthful counter-melody to "Streets of Laredo," weaving early promise and early death into a singular story of a cowboy's life cut short. For the Elizabethan "Still I Will Be Merry," he takes the opposite approach, slowly unraveling a stately, solemn counterpoint to capture the hunger underneath the tune's hey-ho, sing-song merriment.

Best of all is the closing triptych of "The King Walks By/The Open Road/Your Eyes," on which Osborn improvises in the style he calls American raga, accompanied by tablas and tambura. It's here that Osborn is his most prayerful, evoking a midpoint between sarod and guitar, and it's here that his story becomes most remarkable. Having injured his left hand in 1980, and having given up any chance of a career in music, he's come back stronger than ever, using his retirement to become a late-period master.

—Kenny Berkowitz

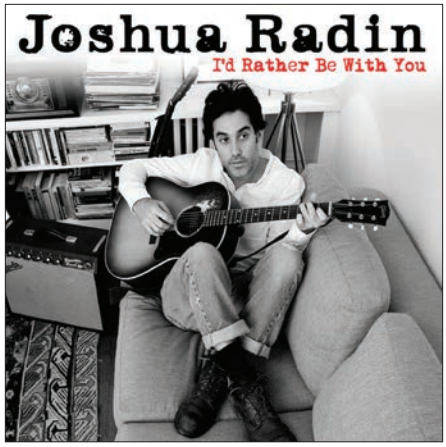


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Joshua Radin

The Fall

(Self-released)

Successful singer-songwriter is right on target with his seventh album

Joshua Radin's *The Fall* presents a cogent case for allowing a singer-songwriter to choose how to present his wares. In the course of a decade, Radin got on the radar by placing his songs in such films and TV shows as *Scrubs* and *Grey's Anatomy*, but this album, his seventh, is his first self-produced effort. With unassuming economy, he hits the bullseye.

Radin's approach gives prominence to his shimmering, strummed acoustics. Their laconic shuffle gives his songs an insouciant Paul Simon-style swagger. Radin's lyrics, delivered in his airy tenor, zero in on striking images—a musician going down with the ship on "Song for You," and "a pocket watch without any hands" on "Keep the Darkness"—which draw on his former occupation as a screenwriter.

His jaunty picking, spiraling strumming, and subtle instrumental coloring propel Radin's sensitive tales of love lost and regained. Silvery droplets of electric guitar break through a cloud layer of acoustics on "Still Spinning." "Enough for You" jostles along on slaloming acoustics as a ghostly gospel organ tolls in the distance. Radin's guitar jangles with the tintinnabulation of wind chimes on "Higher" while subliminal bass pulses and slithers below.

These ornamental touches bolster rather than overcrowd Radin's arrangements. "High and Low" is borne aloft on acoustic glissandos and a soupçon of bell-toned electrics. When Radin strips down to unadorned voice and guitar, as on the whirlpooling "Three Little Birds," his songs prove sturdy enough to stand on their own.

—P.M.



Keller Williams

Raw

(Self-released)

Six years in the making, the jam-band star records winning solo acoustic effort

Despite its disjointed recording history, the solo, all-acoustic *Raw* may just be the perfect Keller Williams album. Williams started the project in 2011, but it lay fallow until he jump-started it again after a winter 2017 tour with Leo Kottke. Those gigs must have inspired Williams, because *Raw* is one of his most consistent sets, focused on his multi-voiced guitar style in which tapping, chiming harmonics, knotty picking, and lyrical strumming collide and conjoin. It's as if Williams' guitar is speaking in tongues.

On "Cookies," plangent strumming gives way to two-handed tapping, which recalls the techniques of Michael Hedges, a key influence on Williams' playing. Rapid-fire triplets tumble into a warren of jittery picking and bell-toned grace notes on the time-signature- slipping "Return to the Moon." Tapped guitar strings stutter with antic energy on the percolating "Thanks Leo," a tip of the hat to Kottke.

Williams' winsome, surreal humor surfaces on "I Forgot," a paranoid gun culture free-association borne on flanged and chunky guitar, and "Short Show," in which Williams' foggy, friendly croon weaves a scatological tale of a gig cut short by a shower of pigeon droppings.

But it's the instrumentals that truly shine, like "Ticks When Told," where pinging harmonics, restless strumming, and rippling picking recede like distant galaxies.

Raw is Williams unvarnished, shorn of electric guitars, pedals, and collaborators, but it's still a Baroque and coruscating leap down the rabbit hole. Maybe he should record all his albums like this.

—P.M.



Kelly & Ellis

The Long Road to You

(Kelly & Ellis Entertainment)

Award-winning duo transform show tunes into country comforts

Before recording *The Long Road to You*, Casey Kelly and Leslie Ellis' debut as Kelly and Ellis, the husband-and-wife duo had each scored a stream of accomplishments, including country hits, a showstopper from the musical *CATS*, and a contribution to the Academy Award-winning film *Titanic*.

Together, they revisit these triumphs. "The Cowboy Song," George Strait's signature hit penned by Kelly, is recast as a forlorn waltz borne on Kelly's ringing cantina guitar and Ellis' warm harmonies. "Anyone Who Isn't Me Tonight," Kelly's Grammy-nominated No. 1 hit for Kenny Rogers and Dottie West, rides scampering acoustics as Kelly's declaration of love receives playful pinpricks from Ellis' saucy interjections.

"Memory," Ellis' breakout number from her Broadway days, gets an Americana makeover with coiling guitars that merge front-porch picking with delicate arpeggios. A revamping of Ellis and Celine Dion's Grammy-and-Oscar-winning "My Heart Will Go On," adds winding acoustics to sumptuous orchestration.

The pair also turns voice and guitars to new tunes. "Who Am I to Judge" wraps a plea for tolerance in the twanging clangor of slip-knot-picked guitars. Alliterative wordplay joins percussive Spanish-flavored guitar to propel "I Just Don't Understand It." "An Ordinary Day" jaunts along on jostling acoustics and waves of vibrato.

The Long Road to You warps Kelly & Ellis' journey—a tuneful autobiography, a slice of music history, and a vision of their future—in lush, guitar-rich arrangements. We're lucky to go along for the ride.

—P.M.

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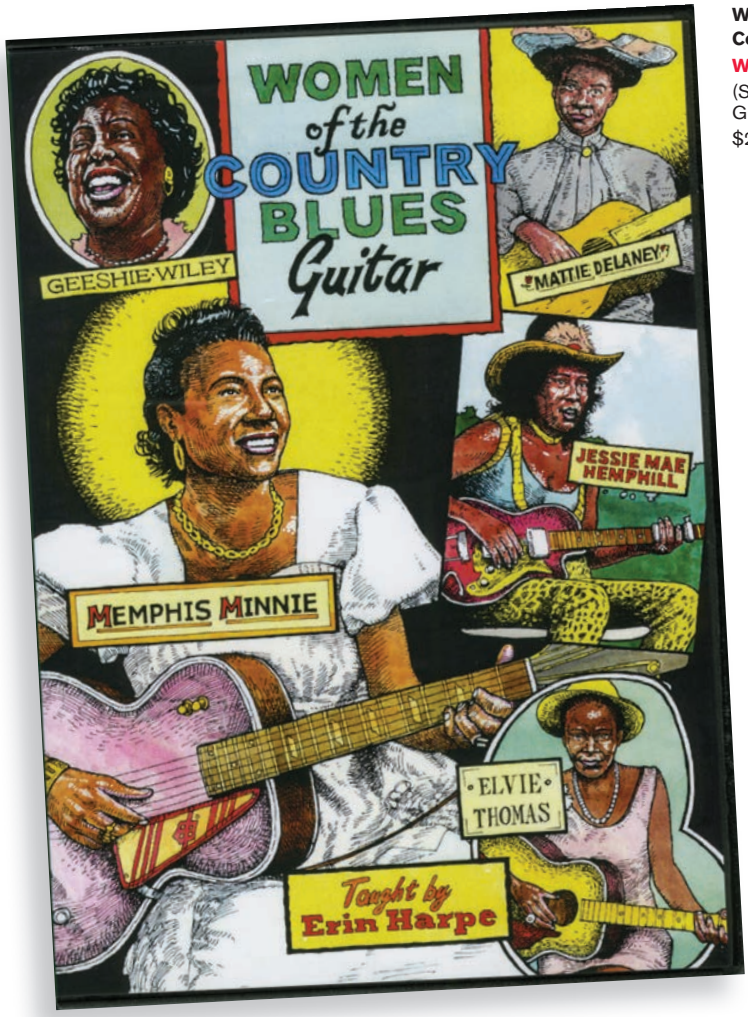
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Women of the Country Blues Guitar

Learn to play in the style of 5 essential pre-war artists

Two the five artists discussed on this 124-minute instructional DVD are well-known: singer and guitarist Memphis Minnie (who was born Lizzie Douglas in Algiers, Louisiana); and singer and guitarist Jesse Mae Hemphill (who gained fame in the '70s for playing fife-and-drum). But guitar instructor Erin Harpe also walks you through songs by the lesser-known, but no less engaging, Delta blues-singer and guitarist Mattie Delaney; Texas singer and guitarist Elvie Thomas (aka L.V. Thomas); and Louisiana-born blues singer and guitarist Geeshie Wiley (aka Lillie Mae Scott). Most of these women recorded primarily during the 1930s and 1940s. And their contribution to the blues canon is substantial, including early recordings of "Motherless Child" and "The Levee Breaks," among other classic songs.

Harpe is a gifted player and a natural teacher. She moves confidently through these ten classic country-blues tunes, offering clear and concise instruction as she shares techniques that should provide a solid arsenal for any aspiring blues guitarist.

The DVD includes a downloadable and printable PDF of notation for each song; I wish that the chord shapes had been superimposed on the screen, but that's just my personal preference. Overall, this instructional material is a welcome introduction to five important country-blues artists who often are overlooked.

—Greg Cahill

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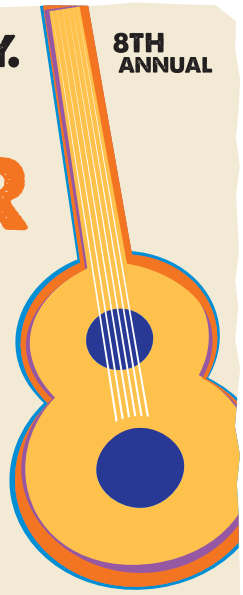
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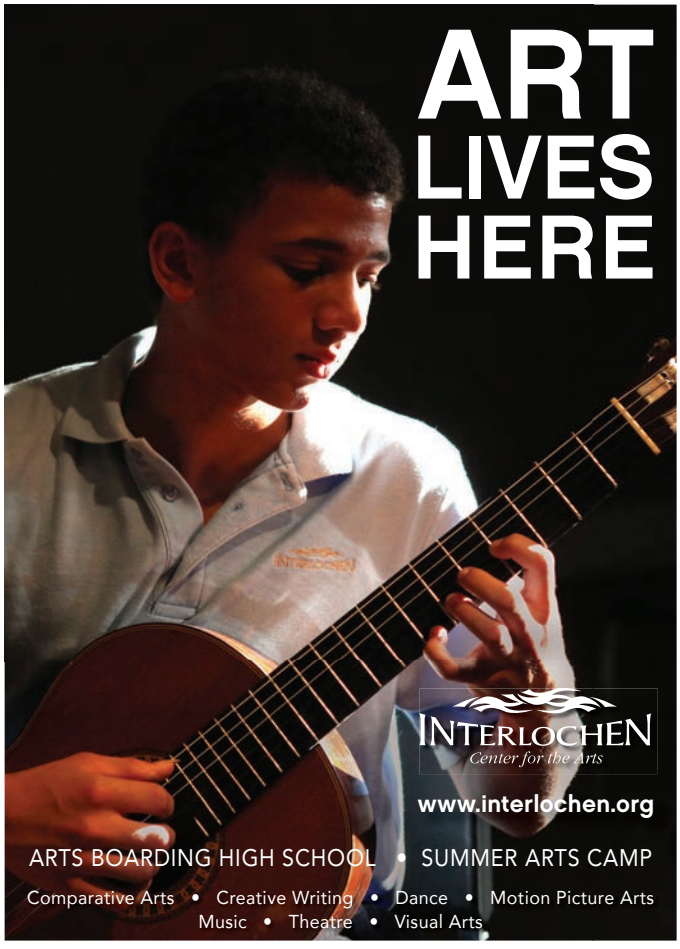
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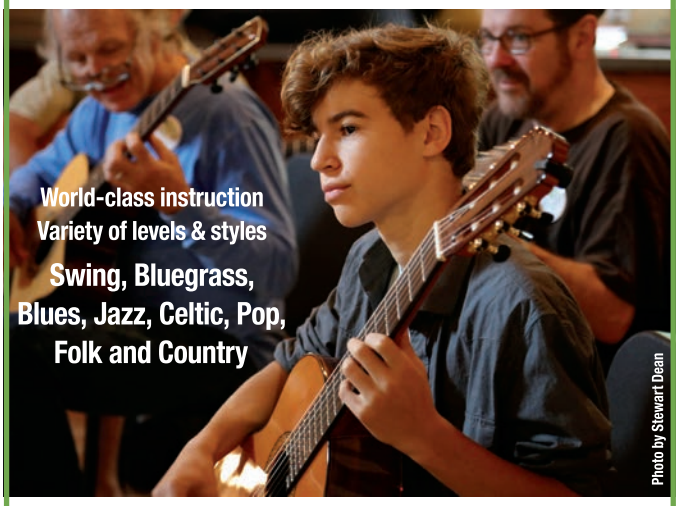
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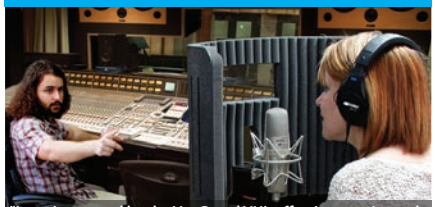
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The White Lady

The Dixie Chicks commemorated their MMXVI Tour with a spectral custom axe

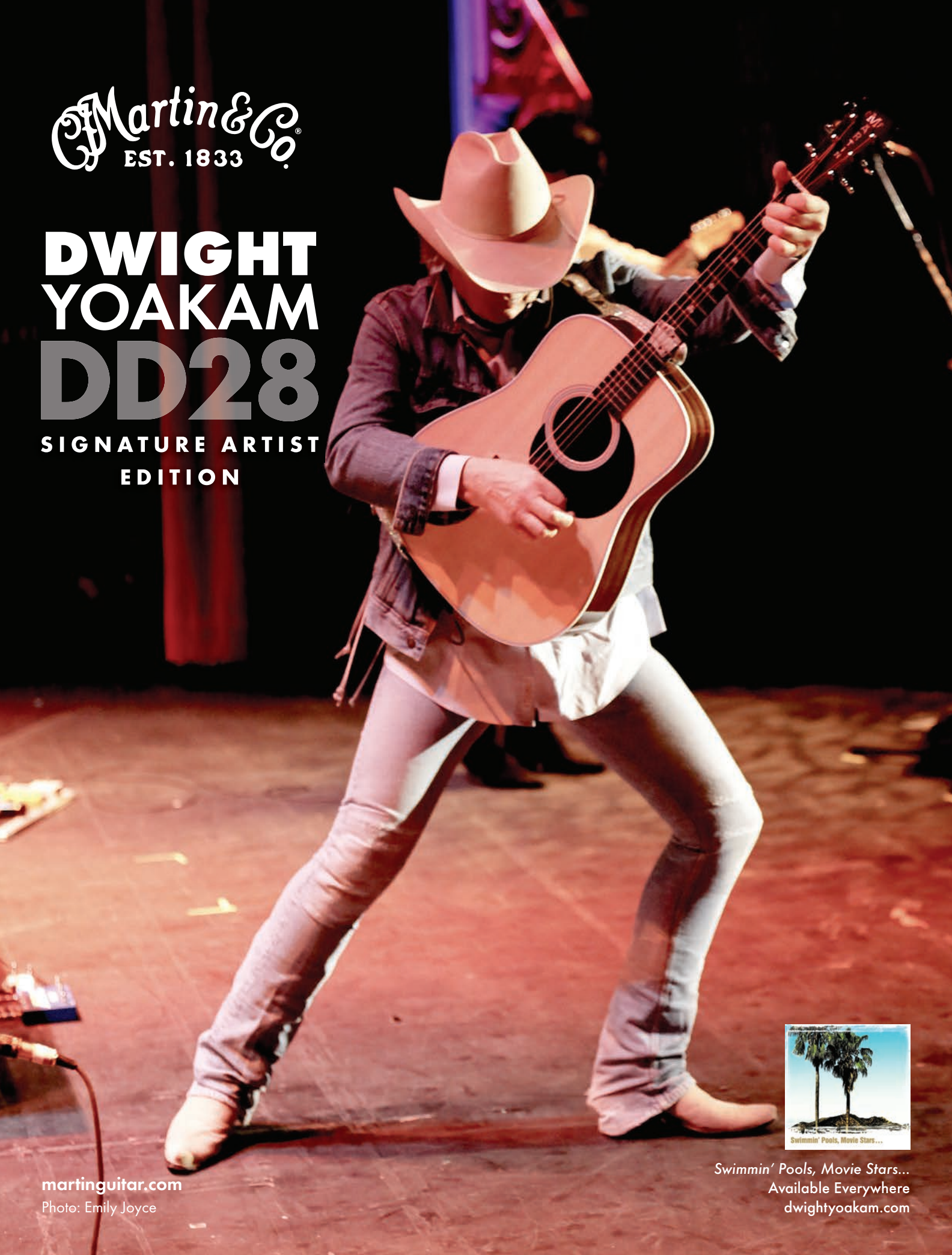
BY GREG CAHILL

In January of 2016, Dixie Chicks music director Keith Sewell reached out to Bourgeois Guitars of Lewiston, Maine, about building three guitars for the band members to use on their MMXVI Tour. One would be for Sewell (a longtime Bourgeois player), one for Natalie Maines (also a longtime Bourgeois player), and one for the band's multi-instrumentalist Emily Robison. Sewell requested that the guitars be finished in white to match the white stage set on their tour. The result was the White Lady, a spectral-finished LDBO (a version of a classic L-00). "While others may have just painted a bunch of guitars stark white and called it a day, Dana [Bourgeois] took this as inspiration to re-think the approach to the 'white guitar,'" says Ryan Fitzsimmons of Bourgeois Guitars. "Using the transparent white electrics of the 1950s as inspiration, he chose figured maple for the body and neck [Maines' version has a Sitka spruce top]. He then created his own transparent white finish, which would show the grain of the instrument. Given that it was always intended as a "stage" guitar, his gorgeous white Mother of Pearl-block with ebony inlayed presentation fretboard was the obvious choice. This is all set off by a white headstock overlay, and a grained ivoroid 'rose-petal' pickguard."

This past January, at Winter NAMM 2017, Bourgeois introduced the production model of that custom axe: the Whyte Rabbit (just in time for the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love), with Adirondack top and curly maple back and sides. AG

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